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ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOLUME THE THIRD

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MICHEL
SEIGNEVR DE MONTAIGNE.

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ESSAYS OF
MONTAIGNE

TRANSLATED BY CHARLES COTTON

TO WHICH ARE ADDED SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF MONTAIGNE, NOTES, A TRANSLATION OF ALL THE LETTERS KNOWN TO BE EXTANT, AND AN ENLARGED INDEX

With Portraits

EDITED BY

WILLIAM CAREW HAZLITT

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOLUME THE THIRD

Que sçais-je?

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ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

BOOK THE SECOND—(Continued)

ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

BOOK THE SECOND—(Continued)

CHAPTER XI

OF CRUELTY

It seems to me that virtue is another and nobler thing than the disposition to good which is innate in us. Well-regulated and well-born souls pursue, indeed, the same methods, and represent in their actions the same face that virtue itself does: but the word virtue imports, I know not what, more great and active than merely for a man to suffer himself, by a happy disposition, to be gently and quietly drawn to the rule of reason. He who, by a natural sweetness and facility, should despise injuries received, would doubtless do a very fine and laudable thing; but he who, provoked and nettled to the quick by an offence, should fortify himself with the arms of reason against the furious appetite of revenge, and after a great conflict, master his own passion, would certainly do a great deal more. The first would do well; the latter virtuously: one action might be called goodness, and the other virtue; for methinks, the very name of virtue presupposes difficulty and contention, and cannot be exercised without an opponent. 'Tis for this reason, perhaps, that we call God good, mighty,

liberal and just; but we do not call Him virtuous, being that all His operations are natural and without endeavour.[1] It has been the opinion of many philosophers, not only Stoics, but Epicureans —(and this addition[2] I borrow from the vulgar opinion, which is false, notwithstanding the witty conceit of Arcesilaus in answer to one, who, being reproached that many scholars went from his school to the Epicurean, but never any from thence to his school, said in answer, "I believe it indeed; numbers of capons being made out of cocks, but never any cocks out of capons."[3] For, in truth, the Epicurean sect is not at all inferior to the Stoic in steadiness, and the rigour of opinions and precepts. And a certain Stoic, showing more honesty than those disputants, who, in order to quarrel with Epicurus, and to throw the game into their hands, make him say what he never thought, putting a wrong construction upon his words, clothing his sentences, by the strict rules of grammar, with another meaning, and a different opinion from that which they knew he entertained in his mind and in his morals, the Stoic, I say, declared that he

[1] Rousseau, in his *Emile*, book v., adopts this passage almost in the same words. Montaigne was not so well known at that time. Yet, could he have been aware of the loan, he would have been the last man to resent it.

[2] "Montaigne stops here to make his excuse for thus naming the Epicureans with the Stoics, in conformity to the general opinion that the Epicureans were not so rigid in their morals as the Stoics, which is not true in the main, as he demonstrates at one view. This involved Montaigne in a tedious parenthesis, during which it is proper that the reader be attentive, that he may not entirely lose the thread of the argument. In some later editions of this author, it has been attempted to remedy this inconvenience, but without observing that Montaigne's argument is rendered more feeble and obscure by such vain repetitions: it is a licence that ought not to be taken, because he who publishes the work of another, ought to give it as the other composed it. But, in Mr Cotton's translation, he was so puzzled with this enormous parenthesis that he has quite left it out."—Coste.

[3] Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Archesilaus*, lib. iv., § 43.

abandoned the Epicurean sect, upon this among other considerations, that he thought their road too lofty and inaccessible :—

"Et ii qui φιλήδονοι vocantur sunt φιλόκαλοι et φιλοδίκαιοι, omnesque virtutes et colunt et retinent."[1])

These philosophers say that it is not enough to have the soul seated in a good place, of a good temper, and well disposed to virtue; it is not enough to have our resolutions and our reasoning fixed above all the power of fortune, but that we are, moreover, to seek occasions wherein to put them to the proof: they would seek pain, necessity, and contempt to contend with them and to keep the soul in breath :—

"Multum sibi adjicit virtus lacessita."[2]

'Tis one of the reasons why Epaminondas, who was yet of a third sect,[3] refused the riches fortune presented to him by very lawful means; because, said he, I am to contend with poverty, in which extreme he maintained himself to the last. Socrates put himself, methinks, upon a ruder trial, keeping for his exercise a confounded scolding wife, which was fighting at sharps. Metellus having, of all the Roman senators, alone attempted, by the power of virtue, to withstand the violence of Saturninus, tribune of the people at Rome, who would, by all means, cause an unjust law to pass in favour of the commons, and, by so doing, having incurred the capital penalties that Saturninus had established against the dissentient, entertained those who, in this extremity, led him to execution with words to

[1] "And those are called lovers of pleasure, being in effect lovers of honour and justice, who cultivate and observe all the virtues."—Cicero, *Ep. Fam.*, xv. 1, 19.

[2] "Virtue attacked adds to its own force."—Seneca, *Ep.*, 13.

[3] The Pythagorean.

this effect: That it was a thing too easy and too base to do ill; and that to do well where there was no danger was a common thing; but that to do well where there was danger was the proper office of a man of virtue.[1] These words of Metellus very clearly represent to us what I would make out, viz., that virtue refuses facility for a companion; and that the easy, smooth, and descending way by which the regular steps of a sweet disposition of nature are conducted is not that of a true virtue; she requires a rough and stormy passage; she will have either exotic difficulties to wrestle with, like that of Metellus, by means whereof fortune delights to interrupt the speed of her career, or internal difficulties, that the inordinate appetites and imperfections of our condition introduce to disturb her.

I am come thus far at my ease; but here it comes into my head that the soul of Socrates, the most perfect that ever came to my knowledge, should by this rule be of very little recommendation; for I cannot conceive in that person any the least motion of a vicious inclination: I cannot imagine there could be any difficulty or constraint in the course of his virtue: I know his reason to be so powerful and sovereign over him that she would never have suffered a vicious appetite so much as to spring in him. To a virtue so elevated as his, I have nothing to oppose. Methinks I see him march, with a victorious and triumphant pace, in pomp and at his ease, without opposition or disturbance. If virtue cannot shine bright, but by the conflict of contrary appetites, shall we then say that she cannot subsist without the assistance of vice, and that it is from her that she derives her reputation and honour? What then, also, would

[1] Plutarch, *Life of Marius*, c. 10.

become of that brave and generous Epicurean pleasure, which makes account that it nourishes virtue tenderly in her lap, and there makes it play and wanton, giving it for toys to play withal, shame, fevers, poverty, death, and torments? If I presuppose that a perfect virtue manifests itself in contending, in patient enduring of pain, and undergoing the uttermost extremity of the gout, without being moved in her seat; if I give her troubles and difficulty for her necessary objects: what will become of a virtue elevated to such a degree, as not only to despise pain, but, moreover, to rejoice in it, and to be tickled with the throes of a sharp colic, such as the Epicureans have established, and of which many of them, by their actions, have given most manifest proofs? As have several others, who I find to have surpassed in effects even the very rules of their discipline. Witness the younger Cato: When I see him die, and tearing out his own bowels, I am not satisfied simply to believe that he had then his soul totally exempt from all trouble and horror: I cannot think that he only maintained himself in the steadiness that the Stoical rules prescribed him; temperate, without emotion, and imperturbed. There was, methinks, something in the virtue of this man too sprightly and fresh to stop there; I believe that, without doubt, he felt a pleasure and delight in so noble an action, and was more pleased in it than in any other of his life:—

"Sic abiit è vita, ut causam moriendi nactum se esse gauderet."[1]

I believe it so thoroughly that I question whether he would have been content to have been deprived of the occasion of so brave an exploit; and if the

[1] "So he quitted life; he rejoiced that a reason for dying had arisen."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, i. 30.

goodness that made him embrace the public concern more than his own, withheld me not, I should easily fall into an opinion that he thought himself obliged to fortune for having put his virtue upon so brave a trial, and for having favoured that brigand[1] in treading underfoot the ancient liberty of his country. Methinks I read in this action I know not what gratification in his soul, and an extraordinary emotion of pleasure, when he looked upon the generosity and height of his enterprise :—

"Deliberatâ morte ferocior,"[2]

not stimulated with any hope of glory, as the popular and effeminate judgments of some have concluded (for that consideration was too mean and low to possess so generous, so haughty, and so determined a heart as his), but for the very beauty of the thing in itself, which he who had the handling of the springs discerned more clearly and in its perfection than we are able to do. Philosophy has obliged me in determining that so brave an action had been indecently placed in any other life than that of Cato ; and that it only appertained to his to end so ; notwithstanding, and according to reason, he commanded his son and the senators who accompanied him to take another course in their affairs :—

"Catoni, quum incredibilem natura tribuisset gravitatem, eámque ipse perpetuâ constantiâ roboravisset, sempérque in proposito consilio permansisset, moriendum potius, quàm tyranni vultus aspiciendus, erat."[3]

[1] Cæsar.

[2] "The more courageous from the deliberation to die."—Horace, *Od.*, i. 37, 29.

[3] "Cato, whom nature had given incredible dignity, which he had fortified by perpetual constancy, ever remaining of his predetermined opinion, preferred to die rather than to look on the countenance of a tyrant."—Cicero, *De Offic.*, i. 31.

Every death ought to hold proportion with the life before it; we do not become others for dying. I always interpret the death by the life preceding; and if any one tell me of a death strong and constant in appearance, annexed to a feeble life, I conclude it produced by some feeble cause, and suitable to the life before. The easiness then of his death and the facility of dying he had acquired by the vigour of his soul; shall we say that it ought to abate anything of the lustre of his virtue? And who, that has his brain never so little tinctured with the true philosophy, can be content to imagine Socrates only free from fear and passion in the accident of his prison, fetters, and condemnation? and that will not discover in him not only firmness and constancy (which was his ordinary condition), but, moreover, I know not what new satisfaction, and a frolic cheerfulness in his last words and actions? In the start he gave with the pleasure of scratching his leg when his irons were taken off, does he not discover an equal serenity and joy in his soul for being freed from past inconveniences, and at the same time to enter into the knowledge of the things to come? Cato shall pardon me, if he please; his death indeed is more tragical and more lingering; but yet this is, I know not how, methinks, finer. Aristippus, to one that was lamenting this death: "The gods grant me such an one," said he.[1] A man discerns in the soul of these two great men and their imitators (for I very much doubt whether there were ever their equals) so perfect a habitude to virtue, that it was turned to a complexion. It is no longer a laborious virtue, nor the precepts of reason, to maintain which the soul is so racked, but the very essence of their soul, its natural and ordinary habit; they have

[1] Diogenes Laertius, ii. 76.

rendered it such by a long practice of philosophical precepts having lit upon a rich and fine nature; the vicious passions that spring in us can find no entrance into them; the force and vigour of their soul stifle and extinguish irregular desires, so soon as they begin to move.

Now, that it is not more noble, by a high and divine resolution, to hinder the birth of temptations, and to be so formed to virtue, that the very seeds of vice are rooted out, than to hinder by main force their progress; and, having suffered ourselves to be surprised with the first motions of the passions, to arm ourselves and to stand firm to oppose their progress, and overcome them; and that this second effect is not also much more generous than to be simply endowed with a facile and affable nature, of itself disaffected to debauchery and vice, I do not think can be doubted; for this third and last sort of virtue seems to render a man innocent, but not virtuous; free from doing ill, but not apt enough to do well: considering also, that this condition is so near neighbour to imperfection and cowardice, that I know not very well how to separate the confines and distinguish them: the very names of goodness and innocence are, for this reason, in some sort grown into contempt. I very well know that several virtues, as chastity, sobriety, and temperance, may come to a man through personal defects. Constancy in danger, if it must be so called, the contempt of death, and patience in misfortunes, may ofttimes be found in men for want of well judging of such accidents, and not apprehending them for such as they are. Want of apprehension and stupidity sometimes counterfeit virtuous effects: as I have often seen it happen, that men have been commended for what really merited blame. An

Italian lord once said this, in my presence, to the disadvantage of his own nation: that the subtlety of the Italians, and the vivacity of their conceptions were so great, and they foresaw the dangers and accidents that might befall them so far off, that it was not to be thought strange, if they were often, in war, observed to provide for their safety, even before they had discovered the peril; that we French and the Spaniards, who were not so cunning, went on further, and that we must be made to see and feel the danger before we would take the alarm; but that even then we could not stick to it. But the Germans and Swiss, more gross and heavy, had not the sense to look about them, even when the blows were falling about their ears. Peradventure, he only talked so for mirth's sake; and yet it is most certain that in war raw soldiers rush into dangers with more precipitancy than after they have been scalded[1]:—

> "Haud ignarus . . . . quantum nova gloria in armis,
> Et prædulce decus, primo certamine possit."[2]

For this reason it is that, when we judge of a particular action, we are to consider the circumstances, and the whole man by whom it is performed, before we give it a name.

To instance in myself: I have sometimes known my friends call that prudence in me, which was merely fortune; and repute that courage and patience, which was judgment and opinion; and attribute to me one title for another, sometimes to my advantage and sometimes otherwise. As to the rest, I am so far from being arrived at the first and most perfect degree of excellence, where virtue is

[1] The original has *eschauldez*.

[2] "Not ignorant how much power the fresh glory of arms and sweetest honour possess in the first contest."—*Æneid*, xi. 154.

turned into habit, that even of the second I have made no great proofs. I have not been very solicitous to curb the desires by which I have been importuned. My virtue is a virtue, or rather an innocence, casual and accidental. If I had been born of a more irregular complexion, I am afraid I should have made scurvy work; for I never observed any great stability in my soul to resist passions, if they were never so little vehement: I know not how to nourish quarrels and debates in my own bosom, and, consequently, owe myself no great thanks that I am free from several vices:—

> "Si vitiis mediocribus et mea paucis
> Mendosa est natura, alioqui recta, velut si
> Egregio inspersos reprehendas corpore nævos"[1]—

I owe it rather to my fortune than my reason. She has caused me to be descended of a race famous for integrity and of a very good father; I know not whether or no he has infused into me part of his humours, or whether domestic examples and the good education of my infancy have insensibly assisted in the work, or, if I was otherwise born so:—

> "Seu Libra, seu me Scorpius adspicit
> Formidolosus, pars violentior
> Natalis horæ, seu tyrannus
> Hesperiæ Capricornus undæ":[2]

but so it is, that I have naturally a horror for most vices. The answer of Antisthenes to him who asked him, which was the best apprenticeship "to

[1] "If my nature be disfigured only with slight and few vices, and is otherwise just, it is as if you should blame moles on a fair body."—Horatius, *Sat.*, i. 6, 65.

[2] "Whether the Balance or dread Scorpio, more potent over my natal hour, aspects me, or Capricorn, supreme over the Hesperian sea."—Horace, *Od.*, ii. 17, 20.

unlearn evil," seems to point at this. I have them in horror, I say, with a detestation so natural, and so much my own, that the same instinct and impression I brought of them with me from my nurse, I yet retain, and no temptation whatever has had the power to make me alter it. Not so much as my own discourses, which in some things lashing out of the common road might seem easily to license me to actions that my natural inclination makes me hate. I will say a prodigious thing, but I will say it, however: I find myself in many things more under reputation by my manners than by my opinion, and my concupiscence less debauched than my reason. Aristippus instituted opinions so bold in favour of pleasure and riches as set all the philosophers against him: but as to his manners, Dionysius the tyrant, having presented three beautiful women before him, to take his choice; he made answer, that he would choose them all, and that Paris got himself into trouble for having preferred one before the other two: but, having taken them home to his house, he sent them back untouched. His servant finding himself overladen upon the way, with the money he carried after him, he ordered him to pour out and throw away that which troubled him. And Epicurus, whose doctrines were so irreligious and effeminate, was in his life very laborious and devout; he wrote to a friend of his that he lived only upon biscuit and water, entreating him to send him a little cheese, to lie by him against he had a mind to make a feast.[1] Must it be true, that to be a perfect good man, we must be so by an occult, natural, and universal propriety, without law, reason, or example? The debauches wherein I have been engaged, have not been, I thank God, of the worst

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 11.

sort, and I have condemned them in myself, for my judgment was never infected by them; on the contrary, I accuse them more severely in myself than in any other; but that is all, for, as to the rest, I oppose too little resistance and suffer myself to incline too much to the other side of the balance, excepting that I moderate them, and prevent them from mixing with other vices, which for the most part will cling together, if a man have not a care. I have contracted and curtailed mine, to make them as single and as simple as I can :—

"Nec ultra
"Errorem foveo."[1]

For as to the opinion of the Stoics, who say, "That the wise man when he works, works by all the virtues together, though one be most apparent, according to the nature of the action"; and herein the similitude of a human body might serve them somewhat, for the action of anger cannot work, unless all the humours assist it, though choler predominate;—if they will thence draw a like consequence, that when the wicked man does wickedly, he does it by all the vices together, I do not believe it to be so, or else I understand them not, for I by effect find the contrary. These are sharp, unsubstantial subleties, with which philosophy sometimes amuses itself. I follow some vices, but I fly others as much as a saint would do. The Peripatetics also disown this indissoluble connection; and Aristotle is of opinion that a prudent and just man may be intemperate and inconsistent. Socrates confessed to some who had discovered a certain inclination to vice in his physiognomy, that it was, in truth, his natural propension, but that he had by discipline

[1] "Nor do I cherish error further."—Juvenal, viii. 164.

corrected it.[1] And such as were familiar with the philosopher Stilpo said, that being born with addiction to wine and women, he had by study rendered himself very abstinent both from the one and the other.[2]

What I have in me of good, I have, quite contrary, by the chance of my birth; and hold it not either by law, precept, or any other instruction; the innocence that is in me is a simple one; little vigour and no art. Amongst other vices, I mortally hate cruelty, both by nature and judgment, as the very extreme of all vices: nay, with so much tenderness that I cannot see a chicken's neck pulled off without trouble, and cannot without impatience endure the cry of a hare in my dog's teeth, though the chase be a violent pleasure. Such as have sensuality to encounter, freely make use of this argument, to shew that it is altogether "vicious and unreasonable; that when it is at the height, it masters us to that degree that a man's reason can have no access,"[3] and instance our own experience in the act of love,

> "Quum jam præsagit gaudia corpus,
> Atque in eo est Venus, ut muliebria conserat arva,"[4]

wherein they conceive that the pleasure so transports us, that our reason cannot perform its office, whilst we are in such ecstasy and rapture. I know very well it may be otherwise, and that a man may sometimes, if he will, gain this point over himself to sway his soul, even in the critical moment, to think of something else; but then he must ply

[1] Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, iv. 27.
[2] Idem, *De Fato*, c. 5.
[3] Idem, *De Senect.*, c. 12.
[4] Lucretius, iv. 1099. The sense is in the preceding passage of the text.

it to that bent. I know that a man may triumph over the utmost effort of this pleasure: I have experienced it in myself, and have not found Venus so imperious a goddess, as many, and much more virtuous men than I, declare. I do not consider it a miracle, as the Queen of Navarre does in one of the Tales of her *Heptameron*[1] (which is a delicate book of its kind), nor for a thing of extreme difficulty, to pass whole nights, where a man has all the convenience and liberty he can desire, with a long-coveted mistress, and yet be true to the pledge first given to satisfy himself with kisses and suchlike endearments, without pressing any further. I conceive that the example of the pleasure of the chase would be more proper; wherein though the pleasure be less, there is the higher excitement of unexpected joy, giving no time for the reason, taken by surprise, to prepare itself for the encounter, when after a long quest the beast starts up on a sudden in a place where, peradventure, we least expected it; the shock and the ardour of the shouts and cries of the hunters so strike us, that it would be hard for those who love this lesser chase, to turn their thoughts upon the instant another way; and the poets make Diana triumph over the torch and shafts of Cupid:—

> "Quis non malarum, quas amor curas habet,
> Hæc inter obliviscitur?"[2]

To return to what I was saying before, I am tenderly compassionate of others' afflictions, and should readily cry for company, if, upon any occasion

[1] "Vn gentil liure pour son estoffe." A contemporary publication, which Montaigne seems to damn with this faint praise. The character of the stories did not, of course, strike him as an objection.

[2] "Who does not forget these evils amid the cares of love?"—Horace, *Epod.*, ii. 37.

whatever, I could cry at all. Nothing tempts my tears but tears, and not only those that are real and true, but whatever they are, feigned or painted. I do not much lament the dead, and should envy them rather; but I very much lament the dying. The savages do not so much offend me, in roasting and eating the bodies of the dead, as they do who torment and persecute the living. Nay, I cannot look so much as upon the ordinary executions of justice, how reasonable soever, with a steady eye. Some one having to give testimony of Julius Cæsar's clemency; "he was," says he, "mild in his revenges. Having compelled the pirates to yield by whom he had before been taken prisoner and put to ransom; forasmuch as he had threatened them with the cross, he indeed condemned them to it, but it was after they had been first strangled. He punished his secretary Philemon, who had attempted to poison him, with no greater severity than mere death." Without naming that Latin author,[1] who thus dares to allege as a testimony of mercy the killing only of those by whom we have been offended, it is easy to guess that he was struck with the horrid and inhuman examples of cruelty practised by the Roman tyrants.

For my part, even in justice itself, all that exceeds a simple death appears to me pure cruelty; especially in us who ought, having regard to their souls, to dismiss them in a good and calm condition; which cannot be, when we have agitated them by insufferable torments. Not long since, a soldier who was a prisoner, perceiving from a tower where he was shut up, that the people began to assemble to the place of execution, and that the carpenters were busy erecting a scaffold, he presently concluded

[1] Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*, c. 74.

that the preparation was for him, and therefore entered into a resolution to kill himself, but could find no instrument to assist him in his design except an old rusty cart-nail that fortune presented to him; with this he first gave himself two great wounds about his throat, but finding these would not do, he presently afterwards gave himself a third in the belly, where he left the nail sticking up to the head. The first of his keepers who came in found him in this condition: yet alive, but sunk down and exhausted by his wounds. To make use of time, therefore, before he should die, they made haste to read his sentence; which having done, and he hearing that he was only condemned to be beheaded, he seemed to take new courage, accepted wine which he had before refused, and thanked his judges for the unhoped-for mildness of their sentence; saying, that he had taken a resolution to despatch himself for fear of a more severe and insupportable death, having entertained an opinion, by the preparations he had seen in the place, that they were resolved to torment him with some horrible execution, and seemed to be delivered from death in having it changed from what he apprehended.

I should advise that those examples of severity by which 'tis designed to retain the people in their duty, might be exercised upon the dead bodies of criminals; for to see them deprived of sepulture, to see them boiled and divided into quarters, would almost work as much upon the vulgar, as the pain they make the living endure; though that in effect be little or nothing, as God himself says, "Who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do"[1]; and the poets singularly dwell

[1] *Luke*, xii. 4.

upon the horrors of this picture, as something worse than death:—

> "Heu! reliquias semiustas regis, denudatis ossibus,
> Per terram sanie delibutas fœde divexarier."[1]

I happened to come by one day accidentally at Rome,[2] just as they were upon executing Catena, a notorious robber: he was strangled without any emotion of the spectators, but when they came to cut him in quarters, the hangman gave not a blow that the people did not follow with a doleful cry and exclamation, as if every one had lent his sense of feeling to the miserable carcase. Those inhuman excesses ought to be exercised upon the bark, and not upon the quick. Artaxerxes, in almost a like case, moderated the severity of the ancient laws of Persia, ordaining that the nobility who had committed a fault, instead of being whipped, as they were used to be, should be stripped only and their clothes whipped for them; and that whereas they were wont to tear off their hair, they should only take off their high-crowned tiara.[3] The so devout Egyptians thought they sufficiently satisfied the divine justice by sacrificing hogs in effigy and representation; a bold invention to pay God so essential a substance in picture only and in show.

I live in a time wherein we abound in incredible examples of this vice, through the licence of our civil wars; and we see nothing in ancient histories more extreme than what we have proof of every day, but I cannot, any the more, get used to it. I could hardly persuade myself, before I saw it with

[1] "Alas! that the half-burnt remains of the king, exposing his bones, should be foully dragged along the ground besmeared with gore."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, i. 44.

[2] In 1580, during his stay there.

[3] Plutarch, *Notable Sayings of the Ancient Kings.*

my eyes, that there could be found souls so cruel and fell, who, for the sole pleasure of murder, would commit it; would hack and lop off the limbs of others; sharpen their wits to invent unusual torments and new kinds of death, without hatred, without profit, and for no other end but only to enjoy the pleasant spectacle of the gestures and motions, the lamentable groans and cries of a man dying in anguish. For this is the utmost point to which cruelty can arrive:—

"Ut homo hominem, non iratus, non timens, tantum spectaturus, occidat."[1]

For my own part, I cannot without grief see so much as an innocent beast pursued and killed that has no defence, and from which we have received no offence at all; and that which frequently happens, that the stag we hunt, finding himself weak and out of breath, and seeing no other remedy, surrenders himself to us who pursue him, imploring mercy by his tears:—

"Questuque cruentus,
Atque imploranti similis,"[2]

has ever been to me a very unpleasing sight; and I hardly ever take a beast alive that I do not presently turn out again. Pythagoras bought them of fishermen and fowlers to do the same:—

"Primoque a cæde ferarum,
Incaluisse puto maculatum sanguine ferrum."[3]

Those natures that are sanguinary towards beasts discover a natural proneness to cruelty. After

[1] "That a man should kill a man, not being angry, not in fear, only for the sake of the spectacle."—Seneca, *Ep.*, 90.

[2] "Who, bleeding, by his tears seems to crave mercy."—*Æneid*, vii. 501.

[3] "I think 'twas slaughter of wild beasts that first stained the steel of man with blood."—Ovid, *Met.*, xv. 106.

they had accustomed themselves at Rome to spectacles of the slaughter of animals, they proceeded to those of the slaughter of men, of gladiators. Nature has herself, I fear, imprinted in man a kind of instinct to inhumanity; nobody takes pleasure in seeing beasts play with and caress one another, but every one is delighted with seeing them dismember, and tear one another to pieces. And that I may not be laughed at for the sympathy I have with them, theology itself enjoins us some favour in their behalf; and considering that one and the same master has lodged us together in this palace for his service, and that they, as well as we, are of his family, it has reason to enjoin us some affection and regard to them. Pythagoras borrowed the metempsychosis from the Egyptians; but it has since been received by several nations, and particularly by our Druids:—

> "Morte carent animæ; semperque, priore relictâ
> Sede, novis domibus vivunt, habitantque receptæ."[1]

The religion of our ancient Gauls maintained that souls, being eternal, never ceased to remove and shift their places from one body to another; mixing moreover with this fancy some consideration of divine justice; for according to the deportments of the soul, whilst it had been in Alexander, they said that God assigned it another body to inhabit, more or less painful, and proper for its condition:—

> "Muta ferarum
> Cogit vincla pati; truculentos ingerit ursis,
> Prædonesque lupis; fallaces vulpibus addit: . . .
> Atque ubi per varios annos, per mille figuras

[1] "Souls never die, but, having left their former seat, live and are received into new homes."—Ovid, *Met.*, xv. 158.

Egit, Lethæo purgatos flumine, tandem
Rursus ad humanæ revocat primordia formæ"[1]:

If it had been valiant, he lodged it in the body of a lion; if voluptuous, in that of a hog; if timorous, in that of a hart or hare; if malicious, in that of a fox, and so of the rest, till having purified it by this chastisement, it again entered into the body of some other man:—

"Ipse ego nam memini, Trojani, tempore belli
Panthoides Euphorbus eram."[2]

As to the relationship betwixt us and beasts, I do not much admit of it; nor of that which several nations, and those among the most ancient and most noble, have practised, who have not only received brutes into their society and companionship, but have given them a rank infinitely above themselves, esteeming them one while familiars and favourites of the gods, and having them in more than humàn reverence and respect; others acknowledged no other god or divinity than they:—

"Belluæ à barbaris propter beneficium consecratæ"[3]:—

"Crocodilon adorat
Pars hæc; illa pavet saturam serpentibus Ibin:
Effigies sacri hic nitet aurea cercopitheci;
Hic piscem fluminis, illic
Oppida tota canem venerantur."[4]

[1] "He makes them wear the silent chains of brutes, the bloodthirsty souls he encloses in bears, the thieves in wolves, the deceivers in foxes; where, after successive years and a thousand forms, man had spent his life, and after purgation in Lethe's flood, at last he restores them to the primordial human shapes."—Claudian, *In Ruf.*, ii. 482.

[2] "For I myself remember that, in the days of the Trojan war, I was Euphorbus, son of Pantheus."—Ovid, *Met.*, xv. 160; and see Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pythagoras*.

[3] "Beasts, out of opinion of some benefit received by them, were consecrated by barbarians."—Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, i. 36.

[4] "This place adores the crocodile; another dreads the ibis, feeder on serpents; here shines the golden image of the sacred ape; here men venerate the fish of the river; there whole towns worship a dog."—Juvenal, xv. 2.

And the very interpretation that Plutarch[1] gives to this error, which is very well conceived, is advantageous to them: for he says that it was not the cat or the ox, for example, that the Egyptians adored: but that they, in those beasts, adored some image of the divine faculties; in this, patience and utility: in that, vivacity, or, as with our neighbours the Burgundians and all the Germans, impatience to see themselves shut up; by which they represented liberty, which they loved and adored above all other godlike attributes, and so of the rest. But when, amongst the more moderate opinions, I meet with arguments that endeavour to demonstrate the near resemblance betwixt us and animals, how large a share they have in our greatest privileges, and with how much probability they compare us together, truly I abate a great deal of our presumption, and willingly resign that imaginary sovereignty that is attributed to us over other creatures.

But supposing all this were not true, there is nevertheless a certain respect, a general duty of humanity, not only to beasts that have life and sense, but even to trees and plants. We owe justice to men, and graciousness and benignity to other creatures that are capable of it; there is a certain commerce and mutual obligation betwixt them and us. Nor shall I be afraid to confess the tenderness of my nature so childish, that I cannot well refuse to play with my dog, when he the most unseasonably importunes me to do so. The Turks have alms and hospitals for beasts. The Romans had public care to the nourishment of geese, by whose vigilance their Capitol had been preserved. The Athenians made a decree that the mules

[1] *On Isis and Osiris*, c. 39.

and moyls which had served at the building of the temple called Hecatompedon should be free and suffered to pasture at their own choice, without hindrance.[1] The Agrigentines[2] had a common use solemnly to inter the beasts they had a kindness for, as horses of some rare quality, dogs, and useful birds, and even those that had only been kept to divert their children; and the magnificence that was ordinary with them in all other things, also particularly appeared in the sumptuosity and numbers of monuments erected to this end, and which remained in their beauty several ages after. The Egyptians[3] buried wolves, bears, crocodiles, dogs, and cats in sacred places, embalmed their bodies, and put on mourning at their death. Cimon gave an honourable sepulture to the mares with which he had three times gained the prize of the course at the Olympic Games.[4] The ancient Xantippus caused his dog to be interred on an eminence near the sea, which has ever since retained the name,[5] and Plutarch says, that he had a scruple about selling for a small profit to the slaughterer an ox that had been long in his service.[6]

CHAPTER XII

APOLOGY FOR RAIMOND DE SEBONDE

Learning is, in truth, a very useful and a very considerable quality; such as despise it merely discover their own folly: but yet I do not prize it at the excessive rate some others do; as Herillus

[1] Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Censor*, c. 3.
[2] Diodorus Siculus, xiii. 17.
[3] Idem, *ibid.*
[4] Herodotus, book ii.
[5] Plutarch, *ut suprâ.*
[6] Idem, *ibid.*

the philosopher for one, who therein places the sovereign good, and maintained that it was merely in her to render us wise and contented,[1] which I do not believe; no more than I do what others have said, that learning is the mother of all virtue, and that all vice proceeds from ignorance. If this be true, it is subject to a very long interpretation. My house has long been open to men of knowledge and is very well known to them; for my father, who governed it fifty years and more, inflamed with the new ardour with which King Francis embraced letters and brought them into esteem, with great diligence and expense hunted after the acquaintance of learned men, receiving them at his house as persons sacred, and who had some particular inspiration of divine wisdom; collecting their sayings and sentences as so many oracles, and with so much the greater reverence and religion, as he was the less able to judge; for he had no knowledge of letters, no more than his predecessors. For my part I love them well; but I do not adore them. Amongst the rest, Peter Bunel, a man of great reputation for knowledge in his time, having, with others of his sort, stayed some days at Montaigne in my father's company, he presented him at his departure with a book intituled "Theologia naturalis; sive Liber creaturarum magistri Raimondi de Sebonde"[2]; and knowing that the Italian and Spanish tongues were familiar to my father, and this book being written in Spanish capped with Latin terminations, he hoped that with little help he might be able to make it turn

[1] Diogenes Laertius, vii. 165.

[2] Raymond de Sebonde, or Sebon, or Sabaude, or Sebeyde, as he was variously named, was a professor of medicine, philosophy, and theology at Toulouse, about 1430. The work was first printed at Daventer about 1484.

to account, and therefore recommended it to him as a very useful piece and proper for the time wherein he gave it to him, which was when the novel doctrines of Martin Luther began to be in vogue, and in many places to stagger our ancient belief: wherein he was very well advised, justly, in his own reason, foreseeing that the beginning of this distemper would easily run into an execrable atheism; for the vulgar not having the faculty of judging of things themselves, suffering themselves to be carried away by fortune and appearance, after having once been inspired with the boldness to despise and question those opinions they had before had in extremest reverence, such as are those wherein their salvation is concerned, and that some of the articles of their religion have been brought into doubt and dispute, they very soon throw all other parts of their belief into the same uncertainty, they having in them no other authority or foundation than the others that had already been discomposed, and shake off all the impressions they had received from the authority of the laws or the reverence of ancient custom as a tyrannical yoke,

"Nam cupide conculcatur nimis ante metutum"[1]:

resolving to admit nothing for the future to which they had not first interposed their own decrees, and given their special consent.

Now, my late father, a few days before his death, having casually found this book under a heap of other neglected papers, commanded me to put it for him into French. It is well to translate such authors as this, where is little but the matter itself to express; but those wherein ornament of language

[1] "For people eagerly spurn that of which they were before most in awe."—Lucretius, v. 1139.

and elegance of style are a main endeavour, are dangerous to attempt, especially when a man is to turn them into a weaker idiom. It was a strange and a new occupation for me; but having by chance at that time little else to do, and not being able to resist the command of the best father that ever was, I did it as well as I could; and he was so well pleased with it as to order it to be printed, which after his death was done.[1] I found the imaginations of this author exceedingly fine, the contexture of his work well followed up, and his design full of piety. And because many people take a delight in reading it, and particularly the ladies, to whom we owe the most service, I have often been called upon to assist them to clear the book of two principal objections. His design is hardy and bold; for he undertakes, by human and natural reasons, to establish and make good against the atheists all the articles of the Christian religion: wherein, to speak the truth, he is so firm and so successful that I do not think it possible to do better upon that subject, and believe that he has been equalled by none. This work seeming to me to be too beautiful and too rich for an author whose name is so little known, and of whom all that we know is that he was a Spaniard, professing medicine at Toulouse about two hundred years ago, I inquired of Adrian Turnebus, who knew so many things, what the book might be. He made answer, that he fancied it was some quintessence drawn from St. Thomas Aquinas; for, in truth, that mind, full of infinite learning and admirable subtlety, was alone capable of such

[1] It bears the following title: La Theologie Naturelle de Raymond Sebon Docteur, Excellent entre les Modernes, en laquelle par l'ordre de Nature est demonstrée la verité de la Foy Chrestienne & Catholique, traduicte nouuellement de Latin en François. 8vo, Paris, 1569.

imaginations. Be this as it may, and whoever was the author and inventor (and 'tis not reasonable, without greater occasion, to deprive Sebonde of that title), he was a man of great sufficiency and most admirable parts.

The first thing they reprehend in his work is, that Christians are to blame to repose upon human reasons their belief, which is only conceived by faith and the particular inspiration of divine grace. In which objection there appears to be something of over-zeal of piety, and therefore we are to endeavour to satisfy those who put it forth with the greater mildness and respect. This were a task more proper for a man well read in divinity than for me, who know nothing of it; nevertheless, I conceive that in a thing so divine, so high, and so far transcending all human intelligence as is this Truth with which it has pleased the goodness of almighty God to enlighten us, it is very necessary that He should, moreover, lend us His assistance, by extraordinary privilege and favour, to conceive and imprint it in our understandings; and I do not believe that means purely human are, in any sort, capable of doing it: for, if they were, so many rare and excellent souls, so abundantly furnished with natural power, in former ages, had not failed, by their reason, to arrive at this knowledge. 'Tis faith alone that vividly and certainly comprehends the deep mysteries of our religion; but withal, I do not say that it is not a brave and a very laudable attempt to accommodate the natural and human capabilities that God has endowed us with to the service of our faith. It is not to be doubted but that it is the most noble use we can put them to, and that there is no design or occupation more worthy of a Christian man than

to make it the aim and end of all his thoughts and studies to embellish, extend, and amplify the truth of his belief. We do not satisfy ourselves with serving God with our souls and understanding only; we, moreover, owe and render Him a corporal reverence, and apply our limbs, motions, and external things to do Him honour; we must here do the same, and accompany our faith with all the reason we have, but always with this reservation, not to fancy that it is upon us that it depends, nor that our arguments and endeavours can arrive at so supernatural and divine a knowledge. If it enter not into us by an extraordinary infusion; if it only enter, not only by arguments of reason, but, moreover, by human ways, it is not in us in its true dignity and splendour, and yet I am afraid we only have it by this way. If we held upon God by the mediation of a lively faith; if we held upon God by Him and not by us; if we had a divine basis and foundation, human accidents would not have the power to shake us as they do; our fortress would not surrender to so weak a battery; the love of novelty, the constraint of princes, the success of one party, the rash and fortuitous change of our opinions, would not have the power to stagger and alter our belief. We should not then leave it to the mercy of every novel argument, nor abandon it to the persuasions of all the rhetoric in the world; we should withstand the fury of these waves with an unmoved and unyielding constancy:—

> "Illisos fluctus rupes ut vasta refundit,
> Et varias, circum latrantes dissipat undas
> Mole suâ."[1]

[1] "As a vast rock repels the broken waves, and dissipates the waters raging about her by its mass." Verses by an anonymous author in the praise of Ronsard, imitating the *Æneid*, vii. 587.

If we were but touched with this ray of divinity, it would appear throughout; not only our words, but our works also, would carry its brightness and lustre; whatever proceeded from us would be seen illuminated with this noble light. We ought to be ashamed that in all the human sects there never was sectary, what difficulty and strange novelty soever his doctrine imposed upon him, who did not, in some measure, conform his life and deportment to it; whereas so divine and heavenly an institution as ours only distinguishes Christians by the name. Will you see the proof of this? compare our manners with those of a Mohammedan or Pagan; you will still find that we fall very short, whereas, having regard to the advantage of our religion, we ought to shine in excellence at an extreme, an incomparable distance, and it should be said of us, "Are they so just, so charitable, so good? Then they are Christians." All other signs are common to all religions; hope, trust, events, ceremonies, penance, martyrs; the peculiar mark of our Truth ought to be our virtue, as it is also the most heavenly and difficult mark, and the most worthy product of Truth. And therefore our good St. Louis was in the right, who when the king of the Tartars, who had become a Christian, designed to visit Lyons to kiss the Pope's feet, and there to be an eye-witness of the sanctity he hoped to find in our manners, immediately diverted him from his purpose, for fear lest our disorderly way of living should, on the contrary, put him out of conceit with so holy a belief.[1] Yet it happened quite otherwise, since, to him who going to Rome to the same end, and there seeing the dissoluteness of the prelates and people of that time, settled

[1] Joinville, c. 19.

himself all the more firmly in our religion, considering how great the force and divinity of it must necessarily be that could maintain its dignity and splendour amongst so much corruption and in so vicious hands. If we had but one single grain of faith we should move mountains from their places, says the sacred Word[1]; our actions, that would then be directed and accompanied by the divinity, would not be merely human; they would have in them something of miraculous as well as our belief:—

"Brevis est institutio vitæ honestæ beatæque, si credas."[2]

Some impose upon the world that they believe that which they do not believe; others, more in number, make themselves believe that they believe, not being able to penetrate into what it is to believe; and we think it strange if, in the civil wars which at this time disorder our state, we see events float and vary after a common and ordinary manner, which is because we bring nothing there but our own. The justice which is in one of the parties, is only there for ornament and cloak; it is indeed alleged, but 'tis not there received, settled, or espoused: it is there as in the mouth of an advocate, not as in the heart and affection of the party. God owes His extraordinary assistance to faith and religion, not to our passions: men are the conductors and herein make use for their own purposes of religion; it ought to be quite contrary. Observe if it be not by our own hands that we guide and train it, and draw it, like wax, into so many figures, at variance with a rule in itself so

[1] *St. Matthew*, xvii. 19.

[2] "The institution of an honest and happy life is short, if you believe me."—Quintilian, xii. 11.

direct and firm. When has this been more manifest than in France in our days? They who have taken it on the left hand, they who have taken it on the right, they who call it black, they who call it white, alike employ it to their violent and ambitious designs, and conduct it with a progress so conform in riot and injustice that they render the diversity they pretend in their opinions, in a thing whereon the conduct and rule of our life depends, doubtful and hard to believe. Could one see manners more exactly the same, more uniform, issue from the same school and discipline? Do but observe with what horrid impudence we toss divine arguments to and fro, and how irreligiously we have rejected and retaken them, according as fortune has shifted our places in these intestine storms. This so solemn proposition, "Whether it be lawful for a subject to rebel and take up arms against his prince for the defence of his religion": do you remember in whose mouths, last year, the affirmative of it was the prop of one party; of what other party the negative was the pillar? and hearken now from what quarter come the voice and instruction of both the one and the other; and if arms make less noise and rattle for this cause than for that. We condemn those to the fire who say that Truth must be made to bear the yoke of our necessity; and how much worse does France than say it? Let us confess the truth; whoever should draw out from the army—aye, from that raised by the king's authority, those who take up arms out of pure zeal and affection to religion, and also those who only do it to protect the laws of their country, or for the service of their prince, would hardly be able, out of all these put together, to muster one complete company.

Whence does it proceed that there are so few to be found who have maintained the same will and the same progress in our public movements, and that we see them one while go but a foot pace, and another run full speed, and the same men, one while damaging our affairs by their violent heat and acrimony, and another while by their coldness, indifference, and slowness, but that they are impelled by special and casual considerations, according to the diversity of circumstances?

I evidently perceive that we do not willingly afford to devotion any other offices but those that best suit with our own passions; there is no hostility so admirable as the Christian; our zeal performs wonders when it seconds our inclinations to hatred, cruelty, ambition, avarice, detraction, rebellion: but moved against the hair towards goodness, benignity, moderation, unless by miracle some rare and virtuous disposition prompt us to it, we stir neither hand nor foot. Our religion is intended to extirpate vices; whereas it screens, nourishes, incites them. We must not mock God. If we did believe in Him, I do not say by faith, but with a simple belief, that is to say (and I speak it to our great shame), if we did believe Him, or knew Him as any other history, or as one of our companions, we should love Him above all other things, for the infinite goodness and beauty that shine in Him: at least, He would go equal in our affections with riches, pleasures, glory, and our friends. The best of us is not so much afraid to offend Him, as he is afraid to offend his neighbour, his kinsman, his master. Is there any so weak understanding that having, on one side, the object of one of our vicious pleasures, and on the other, in equal knowledge and persuasion, the state of an

immortal glory, would exchange the one against the other? And yet we ofttimes renounce this out of pure contempt: for what tempts us to blaspheme, if not, peradventure, the very desire to offend? The philosopher Antisthenes, as the priest was initiating him in the mysteries of Orpheus, telling him that those who professed themselves of that religion were certain to receive perfect and eternal felicity after death; "If thou believest that," answered he, "why dost not thou die thyself?"[1] Diogenes, more rudely, according to his manner, and more remote from our purpose, to the priest that in like manner preached to him to become of his religion that he might obtain the happiness of the other world: "What," said he, "thou wouldst have me believe that Agesilaus and Epaminondas, those so great men, shall be miserable, and that thou, who art but a calf, and canst do nothing to purpose, shalt be happy because thou art a priest?"[2] Did we receive these great promises of eternal beatitude with the same reverence and respect that we do a philosophical lecture, we should not have death in so great horror:—

> "Non jam se moriens dissolvi conquereretur;
> Sed magis ire foras, vestemque relinquere, ut anguis,
> Gauderet, prælonga senex aut cornua cervus."[3]

"I am willing to be dissolved," we should say, "and to be with Jesus Christ."[4] The force of Plato's argument concerning the immortality of the soul sent some of his disciples to untimely graves,

[1] Diogenes Laertius, vi. 4.
[2] Idem, vi. 39.
[3] "He should not, then, dying, repine to be dissolved, but rather step out of doors cheerfully, and, like the snake, be glad to cast his slough, or like the old stag, his antlers."—Lucretius, iii. 612.
[4] St. Paul, *Philippians*, i. 23.

that they might the sooner enjoy the things he had made them hope for.

All this is a most evident sign that we only receive our religion after our own fashion by our own hands, and no otherwise than other religions are received. Either we are in the country where it is in practice, or we bear a reverence to its antiquity, or to the authority of the men who have maintained it, or we fear the menaces it fulminates against unbelievers, or are allured by its promises. These considerations ought, 'tis true, to be applied to our belief, but as subsidiaries only, for they are human obligations; another religion, other testimonies, the like promises and threats, might in the same way imprint a quite contrary belief. We are Christians by the same title that we are Perigordins or Germans. And what Plato says,[1] that there are few men so obstinate in their atheism whom a pressing danger will not reduce to an acknowledgment of the divine power, does not concern a true Christian; 'tis for mortal and human religions to be received by human recommendation. What kind of faith can we expect that should be, that cowardice and feebleness of heart plant and establish in us? A pleasant faith, that does not believe what it believes, but for want of courage to disbelieve it. Can a vicious passion, such as inconstancy and astonishment, cause any regular product in our souls? They are confident in their own judgment, says he,[2] that what is said of hell and future torments is all feigned: but the occasion of making the experiment presenting itself when old age or diseases bring them to the brink of the grave, the terror of death by the horror of their future condition, inspires them with

[1] *Laws*, x. [2] Plato, *Republic.*

a new belief. And by reason that such impressions render them timorous, he forbids in his laws all such threatening doctrines, and all persuasion that anything of ill can befall a man from the gods, excepting for his greater good, when they happen to him, and for a medicinal effect. They say of Bion that, infected with the atheism of Theodorus, he had long had religious men in great scorn and contempt, but that, death surprising him, he gave himself up to the most extreme superstition, as if the gods withdrew and returned according to the necessities of Bion.[1] Plato and these examples would conclude that we are brought to a belief of God either by reason or by force. Atheism being a proposition unnatural and monstrous, difficult also and hard to establish in the human understanding, how arrogant and irregular soever that may be, there are enough seen, out of vanity and pride, to be the authors of extraordinary and reforming opinions, and to outwardly affect their profession, who, if they are such fools, have nevertheless not had the power to plant them in their conscience; they will not fail to lift up their hands towards heaven if you give them a good thrust with a sword in the breast; and when fear or sickness has abated and deadened the licentious fervour of this giddy humour they will readily return, and very discreetly suffer themselves to be reconciled to the public faith and examples. A doctrine seriously digested is one thing; quite another thing are those superficial impressions which, springing from the disorder of an unhinged understanding, float at random and uncertainly in the fancy. Miserable and senseless men, who strive to be worse than they can!

[1] Sebonde, *Theol. Nat.*, c. 24, after Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Bion*.

The error of paganism and the ignorance of our sacred truth made the great soul of Plato, but great only in human greatness, fall yet into this other vicious mistake, "that children and old men are most susceptible of religion," as if it sprang and derived its reputation from our weakness. The knot that ought to bind the judgment and the will, that ought to restrain the soul and join it to the Creator, should be a knot that derives its foldings and strength, not from our considerations, from our reasons and passions, but from a divine and supernatural constraint, having but one form, one face, and one lustre, which is the authority of God and His divine grace. Now, our heart and soul being governed and commanded by faith, 'tis but reason that they should muster all our other faculties, for as much as they are able to perform, to the service and assistance of their design. Neither is it to be imagined that all this machine has not some marks imprinted upon it by the hand of the mighty architect, and that there is not in the things of this world, some image, that in some measure resembles the workman who has built and formed them. He has in His stupendous works left the character of His divinity, and 'tis our own weakness only that hinders us from discerning it. 'Tis what He Himself is pleased to tell us, that He manifests His invisible operations to us, by those that are visible. Sebonde applied himself to this laudable study, and demonstrates to us that there is not any part or member of the world that disclaims or derogates from its maker.[1] It were to do a wrong to the divine goodness, did not the universe consent to our belief; the heavens, the earth, the elements, our bodies and our souls,

[1] *Theol. Nat.*, c. 24.

all these concur to this, if we can but find out the way to use them. They instruct us if we are capable of instruction; for this world is a most sacred temple, into which man is introduced, there to contemplate statues, not the works of a mortal hand, but such as the divine purpose has made the objects of sense, the sun, the stars, the waters, and the earth, to represent those that are intelligible to us. "The invisible things of God," says St. Paul,[1] "from the creation of the world, His eternal power and Godhead," are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made:—

> "Atque adeo faciem cœli non invidet orbi
> Ipse deus, vultusque suos corpusque recludit
> Semper volvendo; seque ipsum inculcat et offert;
> Ut bene cognosci possit, doceatque videndo
> Qualis est, cogatque suas attendere leges."[2]

Now our human reasons and discourses are but sterile and undigested matter: the grace of God is its form; 'tis that which gives to it fashion and value. As the virtuous actions of Socrates and Cato remain vain and fruitless, for not having had the love and obedience of the true Creator of all things for their end and object, and for not having known God, so is it with our imaginations and discourses; they have a kind of body, but it is an inform mass, without fashion and without light, if faith and God's grace be not added to it. Faith coming to tint and illustrate Sebonde's arguments, renders them firm and solid, so that they are capable of serving for direction and first guide to a learner

[1] *Romans*, i. 20.

[2] "And the deity himself does not envy to men the seeing heaven's face; but ever revolving, he still renews its face and body to our view; and himself so inculcates into our minds that we may well know him, and he may instruct us by seeing what he is, and may oblige us to obey his laws."—Manilius, iv. 907.

to put him into the way of this knowledge: they, in some measure, form him to and render him capable of the grace of God, by means whereof he afterwards completes and perfects himself in the true belief. I know a man of authority, bred up to letters, who has confessed to me that he had been reclaimed from the errors of misbelief by Sebonde's arguments. And should they be stripped of this ornament and of the assistance and approbation of the faith, and be looked upon as mere human fancies only, to contend with those who are precipitated into the dreadful and horrible darkness of irreligion, they will even then be found as solid and firm, as any others of the same class that can be opposed against them; so that we shall be ready to say to our opponents:—

"Sin melius quid habes, arcesse, vel imperium fer."[1]

Let them admit the force of our proofs, or let them show us others, and upon some other subject, better woven and of finer thread. I am, unawares, half engaged in the second objection, to which I proposed to make answer in the behalf of Sebonde.

Some say that his arguments are weak and unfit to make good what he proposes, and undertake with great ease to confute them. These are to be a little more roughly handled; for they are more dangerous and malicious than the first. Men willingly wrest the sayings of others to favour their own prejudicated opinions; to an atheist all writings tend to atheism; he corrupts the most innocent matter with his own venom. These have their judgments so prepossessed that they cannot relish Sebonde's reasons. As to the rest, they

[1] "If you have anything better, produce it; otherwise, yield."—Horace, *Ep.*, i. 5, 6.

think we give them very fair play in putting them into the liberty of fighting our religion with weapons merely human, which, in its majesty full of authority and command, they durst not attack. The means that I use, and that I think most proper, to subdue this frenzy, is to crush and spurn under foot pride and human arrogance; to make them sensible of the inanity, vanity, and nothingness of man; to wrest the wretched arms of their reason out of their hands; to make them bow down and bite the ground, under the authority and reverence of the divine majesty. 'Tis to this alone that knowledge and wisdom appertain; 'tis this alone that can make a true estimate of itself, and from which we purloin whatever we value ourselves upon :—

"Οὐ γαρ ἐᾷ φρονέειν ὁ Θεὸς μέγα ἄλλον, ἢ ἑαυτόν."[1]

Let us subdue this presumption, the first foundation of the tyranny of the evil spirit :—

"Deus superbis resistit : humilibus autem dat gratiam."[2]

Understanding is in all the gods, says Plato,[3] and not at all, or very little, in men. Now it is, in the meantime, a great consolation to a Christian man to see our frail and mortal parts so fitly suited to our holy and divine faith, that when we employ them on the subjects of their own mortal and frail nature, they are not, even there, more equally or more firmly applied. Let us see, then, if man has in his power other reasons more forcible than

[1] "The god will not permit that any one shall be wiser than him."—Herodotus, vii. 10.

[2] "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."—1 *Peter*, v. 5.

[3] *Timæus*.

those of Sebonde; that is to say, if it be in him to arrive at any certainty by argument and reason. For St. Augustin,[1] disputing against these people, has good cause to reproach them with injustice, in that they maintain the parts of our belief to be false that our reason cannot establish; and, to show that a great many things may be and may have been, of which our nature could not found the reason and causes, he proposes to them certain known and indubitable experiences wherein men confess they have no insight; and this he does, as all other things, with a close and ingenious inquisition. We must do more than this, and make them know that, to convict the weakness of their reason, there is no necessity of culling out rare examples; and that it is so defective and so blind, that there is no so clear facility clear enough for it: that to it the easy and the hard is all one; that all subjects equally, and nature in general, disclaims its authority, and rejects its meditation.

What does truth mean, when she preaches to us to fly worldly philosophy,[2] when she so often inculcates to us,[3] that our wisdom is but folly in the sight of God; that the vainest of all vanities is man; that the man who presumes upon his wisdom, does not yet know what wisdom is; and that man, who is nothing, if he think himself to be anything, but seduces and deceives himself? These sentences of the Holy Ghost so clearly and vividly express that which I would maintain, that I should need no other proof against men who would, with all humility and obedience, submit to its authority; but these will be whipped at

[1] *De Civit. Dei*, xxi. 5. [2] St. Paul, *Colossians*, ii. 8.
[3] Idem, 1 *Corinthians*, iii. 19.

their own expense, and will not suffer a man to oppose their reason, but by itself.

Let us then now consider a man alone, without foreign assistance, armed only with his own proper arms, and unfurnished of the divine grace and wisdom, which is all his honour, strength, and the foundation of his being: let us see what certainty he has in this fine equipment. Let him make me understand by the force of his reason, upon what foundations he has built those great advantages he thinks he has over other creatures: what has made him believe, that this admirable movement of the celestial arch, the eternal light of those planets and stars that roll so proudly over his head, the fearful motions of that infinite ocean, were established, and continue so many ages, for his service and convenience? Can anything be imagined to be so ridiculous that this miserable and wretched creature, who is not so much as master of himself, but subject to the injuries of all things, should call himself master and emperor of the world, of which he has not power to know the least part, much less to command it. And this privilege which he attributes to himself, of being the only creature in this grand fabric that has the understanding to distinguish its beauty and its parts, the only one who can return thanks to the architect, and keep account of the revenues and disbursements of the world; who, I wonder, sealed for him this privilege? Let us see his letters-patent for this great and noble charge; were they granted in favour of the wise only? few people would be concerned in that: are fools and wicked persons worthy so extraordinary a favour, and, being the worst part of the world, to be preferred before the rest? Shall we believe this man?

"Quorum igitur causâ qui dixerit effectum esse mundum? Eorum scilicet animantium, quæ ratione utuntur; hi sunt dii et homines, quibus profecto nihil est melius."[1]

We can never sufficiently decry the impudence of this conjunction. But, wretched creature, what has he in himself worthy of such a blessing? To consider the incorruptible existence of the celestial bodies, their beauty, grandeur, their continual revolution by so exact a rule:—

"Quum suspicimus magna cœlestia mundi
Templa super, stellisque micantibus æthera fixum,
Et venit in mentem lunæ solisque viarum"[2]:

to consider the dominion and influence those bodies have not only over our lives and fortunes:—

"Facta etenim et vitas hominum suspendit ab astris,"[3]

but even over our inclinations, our thoughts and wills, which they govern, incite, and agitate at the mercy of their influences, as our reason finds and tells us:—

"Speculataque longe,
Deprendit tacitis dominantia legibus astra,
Et totum alterna mundum ratione moveri,
Fatorumque vices certis discurrere signis"[4];

to see that not merely a man, not merely a king, but that monarchies, empires, and all this lower

[1] Balbus the Stoic. "Who has said for whose sake that the world was made? For those living creatures who have the use of reason: these are gods and men, than whom certainly nothing can be better."—Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, ii. 54.

[2] "When we behold the great celestial temples of the world and the firmament studded with glittering stars, and there come into our mind the courses of the moon and sun."—Lucretius, v. 1203.

[3] "He makes men's lives and actions depend on the stars."—Manilius, iii. 58.

[4] "Contemplating the distant stars, he finds that they rule by silent laws; that the world is regulated by alternate causes, and that he can discern by certain signs the turns of destiny."—Manilius, i. 60.

world follow the least dance of these celestial motions :—

"Quantaque quam parvi faciant discrimina motus . . .
Tantum est hoc regnum, quod regibus imperat ipsis"[1];

if our virtue, our vices, our knowledge and science, this very discourse we frame of the power of the stars, and this comparison betwixt them and us, proceed, as our reason supposes, by their means and favour :—

"Furit alter amore,
Et pontum tranare potest, et vertere Trojam :
Alterius sors est scribendis legibus apta.
Ecce patrem nati perimunt, natosque parentes ;
Mutuaque armati coeunt in vulnera fratres.
Non nostrum hoc bellum est ; coguntur tanta movere,
Inque suas ferri pœnas, lacerandaque membra.
. . . . . .
Hoc quoque fatale est, sic ipsam expendere fatum."[2]

If we derive this little portion of reason we have from the bounty of heaven, how is it possible that reason should ever make us equal to it? how subject its essence and conditions to our knowledge? Whatever we see in these bodies astonishes us :—

"Quæ molitio, quæ ferramenta, qui vectes, quæ machinæ, qui ministri tanti operis fuerunt?"[3]

Why do we deprive it of soul, of life, and reason? Have we discovered in it any immovable and in-

[1] "How great changes each little motion brings : so great is this kingdom that it governs kings themselves."—Manilius, i. 55 ; iv. 93.

[2] "One mad with love may cross the sea and overturn Troy ; another's fate is to write laws. Sons kill their fathers : fathers kill their sons ; one armed brother wounds another armed brother. These wars are not ours ; 'tis fate that compels men to punish themselves thus, and thus to lacerate themselves. . . . 'Tis fate that compels me to write of fate."—Idem, iv. 79, 118.

[3] "What contrivance, what tools, what levers, what engines, what workmen, were employed about so stupendous a work?"—Cicero, *De Nat. Deorum*, i. 8.

sensible stupidity, we who have no commerce with the heavens but by obedience? Shall we say that we have discovered in no other creature but man the use of a reasonable soul? What! have we seen anything like the sun? does he cease to be because we have seen nothing like him? and do his motions cease, because there are no others like them? If what we have not seen is not, our knowledge is wonderfully contracted:

"Quæ sunt tantæ animi angustiæ?"[1]

Are they not dreams of human vanity to make the moon a celestial earth? there to fancy mountains and vales, as Anaxagoras did? there to fix habitations and human abodes, and plant colonies for our convenience, as Plato and Plutarch have done, and of our earth to make a beautiful and luminous star?

"Inter cætera mortalitatis incommoda et hoc est, caligo mentium; nec tantum necessitas errandi, sed errorum amor."[2]

"Corruptible corpus aggravat animam, et deprimit terrena inhabitatio sensum multa cogitantem."[3]

Presumption is our natural and original disease. The most wretched and frail of all creatures is man, and withal the proudest. He feels and sees himself lodged here in the dirt and filth of the world, nailed and riveted to the worst and deadest part of the universe, in the lowest storey of the house, and most remote from the heavenly arch, with animals

[1] "How narrow are our understandings?"—Cicero, *De Nat. Deorum*, i. 31.

[2] "Amongst the other inconveniences of mortality, this is one, to have the understanding clouded, and not only a necessity of erring, but a love of error."—Seneca, *De Irâ.*, ii. 9.

[3] "The corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly habitation oppresses the pensive thinker."—St. Augustine, *De Civit. Dei*, xii. 15 (Coste).

of the worst condition of the three,[1] and yet in his imagination will be placing himself above the circle of the moon, and bringing heaven under his feet. 'Tis by the vanity of the same imagination that he equals himself to God, attributes to himself divine qualities, withdraws and separates himself from the crowd of other creatures, cuts out the shares of animals his fellows and companions, and distributes to them portions of faculties and force as himself thinks fit. How does he know, by the strength of his understanding, the secret and internal motions of animals? and from what comparison betwixt them and us does he conclude the stupidity he attributes to them? When I play with my cat, who knows whether I do not make her more sport than she makes me? we mutually divert one another with our monkey tricks: if I have my hour to begin or to refuse, she also has hers. Plato, in his picture of the Golden Age under Saturn,[2] reckons, amongst the chief advantages that a man then had, his communication with beasts, of whom inquiring and informing himself he knew the true qualities and differences of them all, by which he acquired a very perfect intelligence and prudence, and led his life far more happily than we could do: need we a better proof to condemn human impudence in the concern of beasts? This great author was of opinion that nature, for the most part, in the corporal form she gave them had only regard to the use of prognostics that were in his time thence derived. The defect that hinders communication betwixt them and us, why may it not be on our part as well as theirs? 'Tis yet to determine where the fault lies that we understand

[1] Of those that creep on the earth, as distinguished from those that fly and swim.

[2] *Politics.*

not one another; for we understand them no more than they do us; by the same reason they may think us to be beasts as we think them. 'Tis no great wonder if we understand not them when we do not understand a Basque or the Troglodytes; and yet some have boasted that they understood these, as Apollonius Tyaneus, Melampus, Tiresias, Thales, and others. And seeing that, as cosmographers report, there are nations that receive a dog for their king,[1] they must of necessity be able to give some interpretation of his voice and motions. We must observe the parity betwixt us: we have some tolerable apprehension of their sense: and so have beasts of ours, and much in the same proportion. They caress us, they threaten us, and they beg of us, and we do the same to them. As to the rest, we manifestly discover that they have a full and absolute communication amongst themselves, and that they perfectly understand one another, not only those of the same, but of divers kinds:—

"Et mutæ pecudes, et denique secla ferarum
Dissimiles suerunt voces variasque ciere,
Cum metus aut dolor est, aut cumjam gaudia gliscunt."[2]

By one kind of barking the horse knows a dog is angry; of another sort of a bark he is not afraid. Even in the very beasts that have no voice at all, we easily conclude, from the social offices we observe amongst them, some other sort of communication; their very motions converse and consult[3]:—

[1] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, vi. 30.

[2] "The tame herds, and the wilder sorts of brutes, utter dissimilar and various sounds, as fear, or pain, or pleasure influences them."—Lucretius, v. 1058.

[3] There is a remarkable modulation in the tones of a favourite domestic cat, which tells a series of stories in its own way; and Montaigne might have drawn some additional illustrations from the habits of his own.

"Non aliâ longe ratione, atque ipsa videtur
Protrahere ad gestum pueros infantia linguæ."[1]

And why not, as well as our mutes, dispute, contest, and tell stories by signs? of whom I have seen some, by practice, so supple and active in that way that, in earnest, they wanted nothing of the perfection of making themselves understood. Lovers are angry, reconciled, intreat, thank, appoint, and, in short, speak all things by their eyes:—

"E'l silentio ancor suole
Haver prieghi e parole."[2]

What of the hands? We require, promise, call, dismiss, threaten, pray, supplicate, deny, refuse, interrogate, admire, number, confess, repent, fear, confound, blush, doubt, instruct, command, incite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, absolve, abuse, despise, defy, despite, flatter, applaud, bless, humiliate, mock, reconcile, recommend, exalt, entertain, congratulate, complain, grieve, despair, wonder, exclaim, and what not, with a variation and multiplication to the emulation of speech. With the head we invite, demur, confess, deny, give the lie, welcome, honour, reverence, disdain, demand, turn out, rejoice, lament, reject, caress, rebuke, submit, huff, encourage, threaten, assure, inquire. What of the eyebrows? What of the shoulders? There is not a motion that does not speak, and in an intelligible language without discipline, and a public language that every one understands: whence it should follow, the variety and use distinguished from those of others, that this should rather be

[1] "From no far different reason the want of language in children seems to induce them to have recourse to gestures."—Lucretius, v. 1029.

[2] "Even silence in a lover can express entreaty."—Tasso, *Aminta*, ii. Chor.

judged the special property of human nature. I omit what particular necessity on the sudden suggests to those who are in need; the alphabets upon the fingers, grammars in gesture, and the sciences which are only by them exercised and expressed, and the nations that Pliny reports to have no other language.[1] An ambassador of the city of Abdera, after a long harangue to Agis, king of Sparta, demanded of him, "Well, sir, what answer must I return to my fellow-citizens?" "That I have given thee leave," said he, "to say what thou wouldst, and as much as thou wouldst, without ever speaking a word."[2] Is not this a silent speaking, and very easy to be understood?

As to the rest, what is there in our intelligence that we do not see in the operations of animals? Is there a polity better ordered, the offices better distributed, and more inviolably observed and maintained, than that of bees? Can we imagine that such and so regular a distribution of employments can be carried on without reason and prudence?

> "His quidam signis atque hæc exempla sequuti,
> Esse apibns partem divinæ mentis, et haustus
> Æthereos dixere."[3]

The swallows that we see at the return of the spring, searching all the corners of our houses for the most commodious places wherein to build their nests, do they seek without judgment, and, amongst a thousand, choose out the most proper for their purpose, without discretion? In that elegant and admirable contexture of their buildings, can birds rather make

[1] Book vi., c. 30.

[2] Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*

[3] "Judging from these signs and following these cases, they have said that bees possess a tincture of the divine mind and æthereal breath."—Virgil, *Georg.*, iv. 219.

choice of a square figure than a round, of an obtuse than of a right angle, without knowing their properties and effects? Do they bring water and then clay without knowing that the hardness of the latter grows softer by being wet? Do they mat their palace with moss or down, without foreseeing that their tender young will lie more safe and easy? Do they secure themselves from the rainy winds, and place their lodgings towards the east, without knowing the different qualities of those winds, and considering that one is more wholesome than the other? Why does the spider make her web tighter in one place and slacker in another? Why now make one sort of knot and then another, if she has not deliberation, thought, and conclusion? We sufficiently discover in most of their works how much animals excel us, and how weak our art is to imitate them. We see, nevertheless, in our ruder performances that we there employ all our faculties and apply the utmost power of our souls; why do we not conclude the same of them? Why should we attribute to I know not what natural and servile inclination the works that surpass all we can do by nature and art? Wherein, before we are aware, we give them a mighty advantage over us, in making nature, with a maternal sweetness, to accompany and lead them, as it were, by the hand, to all the actions and commodities of their life, whilst she leaves us to chance and fortune, and to seek out, by art, the things that are necessary to our conservation; at the same time denying us the means of being able, by any instruction or contention of understanding, to arrive at the natural sufficiency of beasts; so that their brutish stupidity surpasses in all conveniences all that our divine intelligence can do. Really, at this rate, we might with great

reason call her an unjust stepmother: but it is nothing so: our polity is not so irregular and deformed.

Nature has been universally kind to all her creatures, and there is not one she has not amply furnished with all means necessary for the conservation of its being; for the common complaints that I hear men make (as the license of their opinions one while lifts them up to the clouds, and then again depresses them to the Antipodes), that we are the only animal abandoned, naked upon the bare earth, tied and bound, not having wherewithal to arm and clothe us, but by the spoil of others; whereas nature has covered all other creatures with shells, husks, bark, hair, wool, prickles, leather, down, feathers, scales, silk, according to the necessities of their being; has armed them with talons, teeth, horns, wherewith to assault and defend, and has herself taught them that which is most proper for them, to swim, to run, to fly, and to sing, whereas man neither knows how to walk, speak, eat, or do anything but weep, without teaching:—

"Tum porro puer, ut sævis projectus ab undis
Navita, nudus humi jacit, infans, indigus omni
Vitali auxilio, cum primum in luminis oras
Nixibus ex alvo matris natura profudit,
Vagituque locum lugubri complet; ut æquum est
Cui tantum in vitâ restet transire malorum.
At variæ crescunt pecudes, armenta, feræque,
Nec crepitacillis eis opus est, nec cuiquam adhibenda est
Almæ nutricis blanda atque infracta loquela:
Nec varias quærunt vestes pro tempore cœli:
Denique non armis opus est, non mœnibus altis,
Queis, sua tutentur, quando omnibus omnia large
Tellus ipsa parit, naturaque dædala rerum."[1]

[1] "Then the infant, like a mariner tossed by the raging billows upon the shore, lies naked on the earth, destitute at his very birth of all vital support, from the time when Nature brought him forth from his mother's womb with travail, and he fills the air with doleful cries, as is just, to whom in life it remains only to pass through

Those complaints are false; there is in the polity of the world a greater equality and more uniform relation. Our skins are as sufficient to defend us from the injuries of the weather as theirs for them: witness several nations that still know not the use of clothes. Our ancient Gauls were but slenderly clad, no more than the Irish, our neighbours in so cold a climate. But we may better judge of this by ourselves: for all those parts that we are pleased to expose to the wind and the air, the face, the hands, the lips, the shoulders, the head, according to various customs, are found very able to endure it: if there be a tender part about us, and that seems to be in danger of cold, it should be the stomach where the digestion is, and yet our forefathers had this always open, and our ladies, tender and delicate as they are, go sometimes half bare as low as the navel. Nor is the binding and swathing of infants any more necessary; and the Lacedæmonian mothers brought up theirs in all liberty of motion of members, without any ligature at all.[1] Our crying is common to us, with most other animals, and there are but few creatures that are not observed to groan and bemoan themselves a long time after they come into the world, forasmuch as it is a behaviour suitable to the weakness wherein they find themselves. As to the usage of eating, it is in us, as in them, natural, and without instruction :—

"Sentit enim vim quisque suam quam possit abuti."[2]

troubles. But beasts, wild and tame, of themselves grow up: they need no rattle, no nurse with soothing words to teach them to talk: they do not look out for different robes according to the seasons, and need no arms nor walls to protect them and their goods: earth and nature in all abundance produce all things whereof they have need."—Lucretius, v. 223.

[1] Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, c. 13.

[2] "For every one soon finds out his natural force, which he may abuse."—Lucretius, v. 1032.

Who doubts but an infant, arrived to the strength of feeding himself, may shift to seek his food? and the earth produces and offers him wherewithal to supply his necessity without other culture and art, and if not at all times, no more does she do it to beasts; witness the provision we see ants and other creatures hoard up against the dead seasons of the year. The late discovered nations, so abundantly furnished with meat and natural drink, without trouble or preparation, give us to understand that bread is not our only food, and that without tillage our mother Nature has provided us abundantly with all we stand in need of; nay, it would appear still more fully and plentifully than she does at present, when we have mixed up these with our own industry:—

> "Et tellus nitidas fruges, vinetaque læta
> Sponte suâ primum mortalibus ipsa creavit;
> Ipsa dedit dulces fœtus et pabula læta;
> Quæ nunc vix nostro gradescunt aucta labore,
> Conterimusque boves, et vires agricolarum"[1]:

the depravity and irregularity of our appetite outstrip all the inventions we can contrive to satisfy it.

As to arms, we have more that are natural than most other animals, more various motions of the limbs, and naturally and without lessons, extract more service from them: those that are trained up to fight naked, are seen to throw themselves upon hazard like our own; if some beasts surpass us in this advantage, we surpass several others. And the industry of fortifying the body and protecting it by acquired means we have by instinct and natural precept; as, for examples: the elephant

[1] "The earth at first spontaneously afforded glossy fruits and glad wines to mankind; gave them prolific herds and glowing harvests, which now scarcely by art more abundantly yield, though men and oxen strive to improve the soil."—Lucretius, ii. 1137.

sharpens and whets the teeth he makes use of in war (for he has particular ones for that service which he spares and never employs at all to any other use); when bulls go to fight, they toss and throw the dust about them; boars whet their tusks; and the ichneumon, when he is about to engage with the crocodile, fortifies his body by covering and encrusting it all over with close-wrought, well-kneaded slime, as with a cuirass: why shall we not say, that it is also natural for us to arm ourselves with wood and iron?

As to speech, it is certain that, if it be not natural, it is not necessary. Nevertheless, I believe that a child who had been brought up in absolute solitude, remote from all society of men (which would be a trial very hard to make) would have some kind of speech to express his meaning: and 'tis not to be supposed that nature should have denied that to us which she has given to several other animals: for what other than speech is this faculty we observe in them of complaining, rejoicing, calling to one another for succour, and the softer murmurings of love, which they perform with the voice? And why should they not speak to one another? they speak very well to us, and we to them; in how many several ways do we speak to our dogs, and they answer us? We converse with them in another sort of language and other appellations than we do with birds, hogs, oxen, and horses; and alter the idiom according to the kind:—

> "Cosi per entro loro schiera bruna
> S'ammusa l'una con l'altra formica,
> Forse aspiar lor via et lor fortuna."[1]

[1] "So amongst their sable bands, one ant with another is seen to communicate: observe, perhaps, each others' ways and ask what prizes they have brought home."—Dante, *Purg.*, c. xxvi. 34.

Lactantius[1] seems to attribute to beasts not only speech, but laughter also. And the difference of language which is manifest amongst us, according to the variety of countries, is also observed in animals of the same kind: Aristotle,[2] in proof of this, instances the various calls of partridges, according to the situation of places:—

> "Variæque volucres . . .
> Longe alias alio faciunt in tempore voces . . .
> Et partim mutant cum tempestatibus una
> Raucisonos cantus."[3]

But it is yet to be known what language this child would speak; and of this what is said by guess has no great weight. If any one should allege to me, in opposition to this opinion, that those who are naturally deaf, speak not: I answer, that this follows not only because they could not receive the instruction of speaking by the ear, but because the sense of hearing, of which they are deprived, has relation to that of speaking, holding together by a natural tie; in such manner, that what we speak we must first speak to ourselves within, and make it first sound in our own ears, before we can utter it to others.

All this I have said to prove the resemblance there is in human things, and to bring us back and join us to the crowd: we are neither above nor below the rest. All that is under heaven, says the wise man, runs one law and one fortune:—

> "Indupedita suis fatalibus omnia vinclis."[4]

There is indeed some difference; there are orders

[1] *Instit. Divin.*, iii. 10. [2] *Hist. of Animals*, lib. iv., c. 9.
[3] "Various birds make quite different notes; some their hoarse songs change with the seasons."—Lucretius, v. 1077, 1080, 2, 3.
[4] "All things are bound in the same fatal chains."—Lucretius, v. 874.

and degrees; but 'tis under the aspect of one same nature:—

> "Res . . . quæque suo ritu procedit; et omnes
> Fœdere naturæ certo discrimina servant."[1]

Man must be compelled and restrained within the bounds of this polity. Wretched being, he is really not in a condition to step over the rail; he is fettered and circumscribed, he is subjected to a co-ordinate obligation with the other creatures of his class, and of a very humble condition, without any prerogative or pre-eminence true and real; that which he attributes to himself, by vain fancy and opinion, has neither body nor taste. And if it be so, that he only of all the animals has this privilege of the imagination, and this irregularity of thoughts representing to him that which is, that which is not, and that he would have, the false and the true; 'tis an advantage dearly bought, and of which he has very little reason to be proud; for from that springs the principal fountain of all the evils that befall him, sin, sickness, irresolution, affliction, despair. I say then (to return to my subject) that there is no probability to induce a man to believe, that beasts, by natural and compulsory tendency, do the same things that we do by our choice and industry; we ought, from like effects, to conclude like faculties, and from greater effects greater faculties, and consequently confess that the same reason, the same method by which we operate, are common with them, or that they have others that are better. Why should we imagine in them this natural constraint, who experience no such effect in ourselves? Add to

[1] "Each thing proceeds by its own rule, and all observe the laws of nature under a sure agreement."—Lucretius, v. 921.

which, that it is more honourable to be guided and obliged to act regularly by a natural and irresistible condition, and nearer allied to the Divinity, than to act regularly by a licentious and fortuitous liberty, and more safe to intrust the reins of our conduct in the hands of nature than in our own. The vanity of our presumption is the cause that we had rather owe our sufficiency to our own strength than to her bounty, and that we enrich the other animals with natural goods, and renounce them in their favour, to honour and ennoble ourselves with goods acquired; very foolishly in my opinion; for I should as much value parts naturally and purely my own, as those I had begged and obtained from education: it is not in our power to obtain a nobler reputation, than to be favoured of God and nature.

For this reason, consider the fox, of which the people of Thrace make use when they desire to pass over the ice of some frozen river, turning him out before them to that purpose; should we see him lay his ear upon the bank of the river, down to the ice, to listen if from a more remote or nearer distance he can hear the noise of the water's current, and according as he finds by that the ice to be of a less or greater thickness, retire or advance[1]: should we not have reason thence to believe that he had the same thoughts in his head that we should have upon the like occasion, and that it is a ratiocination and consequence drawn from natural sense: "that which makes a noise, runs; that which runs, is not frozen: what is not frozen is liquid; and that which is liquid yields to impression"? For to attribute this to a vivacity of the sense of hearing without meditation and

[1] Plutarch, *On the Industry of Animals*, c. 12.

consequence, is a chimera that cannot enter into the imagination. We may suppose the same of the many subtleties and inventions with which beasts protect themselves from enterprises we plot against them.

And if we would make an advantage of this that it is in our power to seize them, to employ them in our service, and to use them at our pleasure, 'tis but still the same advantage we have over one another. We have our slaves upon these terms; and the Climacidæ,[1] were they not women in Syria who, being on all fours, served for a step-ladder, by which the ladies mounted the coach? And the majority of free persons surrender, for very trivial advantages, their life and being into the power of another; the wives and concubines of the Thracians contended who should be chosen to be slain upon their husband's tomb.[2] Have tyrants ever failed of finding men enough devoted to their service; some of them, moreover, adding this necessity of accompanying them in death as in life? whole armies have so bound themselves to their captains.[3] The form of the oath in that rude school of fencers, who were to fight it out to the last, was in these words: "We swear to suffer ourselves to be chained, burned, beaten, killed with the sword, and to endure all that true gladiators suffer from their master, religiously engaging both bodies and souls in his service[4]:—

> "Ure meum, si vis, flammâ caput, et pete ferro
> Corpus, et in torto verbere terga seca"[5]:

this was an obligation indeed, and yet there were,

[1] Plutarch, *How to distinguish a Flatterer from a Friend.*
[2] Herodotus, v. 5.
[3] Cæsar, *De Bell. Gall.*, iii. 22.
[4] Petronius, *Sat.*, c. 117.
[5] "Burn my head with fire if you will, wound me with steel, and scourge my shoulders with twisted wire."—Tibullus, i. 90, 21.

in some years, ten thousand who entered into it and lost themselves in it. When the Scythians interred their king, they strangled upon his body the most beloved of his concubines, his cupbearer, the master of his horse, his chamberlain, the usher of his chamber, and his cook; and upon his anniversary they killed fifty horses, mounted by fifty pages, whom they had impaled up the spine of the back to the throat, and there left them planted in parade about his tomb.[1] The men that serve us do it more cheaply, and for a less careful and favourable usage than that we entertain our hawks, horses, and dogs with. To what solicitude do we not submit for the convenience of these? I do not think that servants of the most abject condition would willingly do that for their masters, that princes think it an honour to do for these beasts. Diogenes seeing his relations solicitous to redeem him from servitude: "They are fools," said he; "'tis he that keeps and feeds me is my servant, not I his."[2] And they, who make so much of beasts, ought rather to be said to serve them, than to be served by them. And withal they have this more generous quality, that one lion never submitted to another lion, nor one horse to another, for want of courage. As we go to the chase of beasts, so do tigers and lions to the chase of men, and they do the same execution one upon another, dogs upon hares, pikes upon tench, swallows upon flies, sparrowhawks upon blackbirds and larks:—

> "Serpente ciconia pullos
> Nutrit, et inventa per devia rura lacerta, . . .
> Et leporem aut capream famulæ Jovis et generosæ
> In saltu venantur aves."[3]

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[1] Herodotus, iv. 71. [2] Diogenes Laertius, vi. 75.
[3] "The stork feeds her young with the snake and with lizards found

We divide the quarry, as well as the pains and labour of the chase, with our hawks and hounds; and above Amphipolis in Thrace, the hawkers and wild falcons equally divide the prey[1]: as also, along the Lake Mæotis, if the fisherman does not honestly leave the wolves an equal share of what he has caught, they presently go and tear his nets in pieces. And as we have a way of hunting that is carried on more by subtlety than force, as angling with line and hook, there is also the like amongst animals. Aristotle says[2] that the cuttle-fish casts a gut out of her throat as long as a line, which she extends and draws back at pleasure; and as she perceives some little fish approach, she lets it nibble upon the end of this gut, lying herself concealed in the sand or mud, and by little and little draws it in, till the little fish is so near her, that at one spring she may surprise it.

As to what concerns strength, there is no creature in the world exposed to so many injuries as man: we need not a whale, an elephant, or a crocodile, nor any such animals, of which one alone is sufficient to defeat a great number of men, to do our business: lice are sufficient to vacate Sylla's dictatorship; and the heart and life of a great and triumphant emperor is the breakfast of a little worm.[3]

Why should we say that it is only for man by knowledge, improved by art and meditation, to distinguish the things commodious for his being and proper for the cure of his diseases from those which are not so; to know the virtues of rhubarb

in rural bye-places. And the noble birds attendant on Jupiter hunt in the wood for hares and kids."—Juvenal, xiv. 74, 81.

[1] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, x. 8.

[2] Plutarch, *On the Industry of Animals*, c. 28.

[3] Sylla died of the disease in question at the age of sixty. This class of reflexion reminds one of the philosophizing Hamlet.

and fern: when we see the goats of Candia, when wounded with an arrow, amongst a million of plants choose out dittany for their cure, and the tortoise, when she has eaten of a viper, immediately go to look out for marjoram to purge her; the dragon rubs and clears his eyes with fennel; the storks give themselves clysters of sea-water; the elephants draw out, not only of their own bodies and those of their companions, but out of the bodies of their master too (witness the elephant of King Porus, whom Alexander defeated[1]) the dart and javelins thrown at them in battle, and that so dextrously that we ourselves could not do it with so little pain; why do not we say here also that this is knowledge and prudence? For to allege to their disparagement that 'tis by the sole instruction and dictate of nature that they know all this, is not to take from them the dignity of knowledge and prudence, but with greater reason to attribute it to them than to us, for the honour of so infallible a mistress. Chrysippus,[2] though in all other things as scornful a judge of the condition of animals as any other philosopher whatever, considering the motions of a dog who, coming to a place where three ways meet, either to hunt after his master he has lost, or in pursuit of some game that flies before him, goes snuffing first in one of the ways and then in another, and after having made himself sure of two, without finding the trace of what he seeks, throws himself into the third without examination, is forced to confess that this reasoning is in the dog: "I have followed my master by foot to this place; he must, of necessity, be gone by one of these three ways; he is not gone this way nor that; he must then infallibly be gone

[1] Plutarch, *ubi suprà*, c. 12.
[2] Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrh. Hypot.*, i. 14.

this other": and that assuring himself by such reasoning and conclusion, he makes no use of his nose in the third way, nor ever lays it to the ground, but suffers himself to be carried on by the force of reason. This mode, which is purely logical, and this method of propositions divided and conjoined, and the right enumeration of parts, is it not every whit as good that the dog knows all this of himself as if he had learnt it of Trapezuntius?[1]

Nor are animals incapable of being instructed after our method. We teach blackbirds, ravens, pies, and parrots to speak; and the facility wherewith we see them render their voices and breath so supple and pliant to be formed and confined within a certain number of letters and syllables, evinces that they have a reasoning examination of things within that makes them so docile and willing to learn.

Everybody, I believe, is glutted with the several sorts of tricks that tumblers teach their dogs; the dances where they do not miss any one cadence of the sound they hear; the many various motions and leaps they make them perform by the command of a word. But I observe with more admiration this effect, which, nevertheless, is very common, in the dogs that lead the blind both in the country and in cities: I have taken notice how they stop at certain doors, where they are wont to receive alms; how they avoid the encounter of coaches and carts, even where they have sufficient room to pass; I have seen them, along the trench of a town, forsake a plain and even path, and take a worse, only to

[1] Georgius Trapezuntius, or George of Trebizond, born 1396, died 1486; a learned translator of and commentator upon Aristotle and other authors. Cotton renders it: "By rules of art." Coste ludicrously translates it: "By knowledge of that phrase in geometry which they call a trapezium."

keep their masters farther from the ditch. How could a man have made this dog understand that it was his office to look to his master's safety only, and to despise his own convenience to serve him? And how had he the knowledge that a way was large enough for him that was not so for a blind man? Can all this be apprehended without ratiocination?

I must not omit what Plutarch[1] says he saw of a dog at Rome with the Emperor Vespasian, the father, at the theatre of Marcellus: this dog served a player who acted a farce of several gestures and several personages, and had therein his part. He had, amongst other things, to counterfeit himself for some time dead, by reason of a certain drug he was supposed to have eaten: after he had swallowed a piece of bread, which passed for the drug, he began after a while to tremble and stagger, as if he was stupefied: at last, stretching himself out stiff, as if he had been dead, he suffered himself to be drawn and dragged from place to place, as it was his part to do; and afterward, when he knew it to be time, he began first gently to stir, as if newly awakened out of profound sleep, and lifting up his head, looked about him after such a manner as astonished all the spectators.

The oxen that served in the royal gardens of Susa to water them and turn certain great wheels to draw water for that purpose, to which buckets were fastened (such as there are many in Languedoc), being ordered every one to draw a hundred turns a day, they were so accustomed to this number that it was impossible by force to make them draw one turn more, but, their task being performed, they would suddenly stop and

[1] *On the Industry of Animals*, c. 18.

stand still.[1] We are almost men before we can count a hundred, and have lately discovered nations that have no knowledge of numbers at all.

There is still more understanding required in the teaching of others than in being taught; now, setting aside what Democritus held[2] and proved, that most of the arts we have were taught us by other animals, as the spider has taught us to weave and sew, the swallow to build, the swan and nightingale music, and several animals, in imitating them, to make medicines: Aristotle[3] is of opinion that the nightingale teach their young ones to sing and spend a great deal of time and care in it, whence it happens that those we bring up in cages and that have not had time to learn of their parents, lose much of the grace of their singing: we may judge by this that they improve by discipline and study: and even amongst the wild birds they are not all one and alike; every one has learnt to do better or worse, according to its capacity; and so jealous are they of one another whilst learning, that they contend with emulation, and with so vigorous a contention that sometimes the vanquished fall dead upon the spot, the breath rather failing than the voice. The younger ruminate pensive, and begin to imitate some broken notes; the disciple listens to the master's lesson, and gives the best account it is able; they are silent by turns; one may hear faults corrected and observe reprehensions of the teacher.[4] "I have formerly seen," says Arrian, "an elephant having a cymbal hung at each leg, and another fastened to his trunk, at the sound of which all the others danced about him, rising and falling at certain

[1] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 20.
[2] Idem, *ibid.*, c. 14.
[3] Idem, *ibid.*, c. 18.
[4] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, x. 29.

cadences, as they were guided by the instrument, and it was delightful to hear this harmony." In the spectacles of Rome, there were ordinarily seen elephants taught to move and dance to the sound of the voice, dances wherein were several changes and steps, and cadences very hard to learn.[1] And some have been seen, in private, so intent upon their lesson as to practise it by themselves, that they might not be chidden nor beaten by their masters.[2]

But this other story of the magpie, for which we have Plutarch himself to answer,[3] is very strange; she was in a barber's shop at Rome, and did wonders in imitating with her voice whatever she heard. It happened one day that certain trumpeters stood a good while sounding before the shop. After that, and all the next day, the magpie was pensive, dumb, and melancholy, which everybody wondered at and thought that the noise of the trumpets had thus stupefied and dazed her, and that her voice was gone with her hearing: but they found at last that it was a profound meditation and a retiring into herself, her thoughts exercising and preparing her voice to imitate the sound of those trumpets; so that the first voice she uttered was perfectly to imitate their strains, stops, and changes: having, for this new lesson, quitted and disdained all she had learned before.

I will not omit this other example of a dog, which the same Plutarch (I can't tell them in order, as to which I get confused; nor do I observe it here any more than elsewhere in my work) says[4] he saw on shipboard: this dog being puzzled how to get at the oil that was in the bottom of a jar

[1] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 12.
[2] Idem, *ibid.*, c. 12. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, viii. 3.
[3] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 18.
[4] Idem, *ibid.*, c. 12.

and which he could not reach with his tongue, by reason of the narrow mouth of the vessel, went and fetched stones, and let them fall into the jar, till he made the oil rise so high, that he could reach it. What is this but an effect of a very subtle capacity? 'Tis said that the ravens of Barbary do the same, when the water they would drink is too low.[1] This action is something akin to what Juba, a king of their nation, relates of the elephants: that, when by the craft of the hunter, one of them is trapped in certain deep pits prepared for them and covered over with brush to deceive them, all the rest diligently bring a great many stones and logs of wood to raise the bottom so that he may get out.[2] But this animal in several other features comes so near to human capacity, that should I particularly relate all that experience has delivered to us, I should easily have granted me what I ordinarily maintain, namely, that there is more difference betwixt such and such a man, than betwixt such a man and such a beast. The keeper of an elephant, in a private house of Syria, robbed him every meal of the half of his allowance: one day his master would himself feed him and poured the full measure of barley he had ordered for his allowance into his manger; at which the elephant, casting an angry look at his keeper, with his trunk separated the one half from the other, and thrust it aside, thus declaring the wrong that was done him. And another, having a keeper that mixed stones with his corn to make up the measure, came to the pot where he was boiling flesh for his own dinner, and filled it with ashes.[3] These are particular facts: but that which all the world has

[1] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 12. [2] Idem, *ibid.*, c. 10.
[3] Idem, *ibid.*, c. 12.

seen, and all the world knows, is that in all the armies of the East one of their greatest elements of strength was elephants, with whom they did without comparison far more execution than we now do with our artillery, which is, as it were, in their stead in a day of battle (as may easily be judged by such as are read in ancient history) :—

> "Siquidem Tyrio servire solebant
> Annibali, et nostris ducibus, regique Molosso
> Horum majores, et dorso ferre cohortes,
> Partem aliquam belli, et euntem in prælia turrim."[1]

They must of necessity very confidently have relied upon the fidelity and understanding of these beasts, when they entrusted them with the vanguard of a battle, where the least stop they should have made, by reason of the bulk and heaviness of their bodies, and the least fright that should have made them face about upon their own people, had been enough to spoil all. And there are but few examples where it has happened that they have fallen foul upon their own troops, whereas we ourselves break into our own battalions and rout one another. They had the commission, not of one simple movement only, but of many several things they were to perform in the battle; as the Spaniards did to their dogs in their new conquest of the Indies, to whom they gave pay and allowed them a share in the spoil; and those animals showed as much dexterity and judgment in pursuing the victory and stopping the pursuit, in charging and retiring as occasion required, and in distinguishing their friends from their enemies, as they did ardour and fierceness.[2]

[1] "The ancestors of these were wont to serve the Tyrian Hannibal, and our own captains, and the Molossian king, and to bear upon their backs cohorts, as a part of war, and [to bring] the tower, going into battle."—Juvenal, xii. 107.

[2] And see Pliny, viii. 40; Olearius, *Var. Hist.*, xiv. 46.

We more admire and value things that are unusual and strange than those of ordinary observation; I had not else so long insisted upon these examples: for I believe, whoever shall strictly observe what we ordinarily see in those animals we have amongst us, may there find as wonderful effects as those we fetch from remote countries and ages. 'Tis one same nature that rolls her course, and whoever has sufficiently considered the present state of things, might certainly conclude as to both the future and the past. I have formerly seen men brought hither by sea, from very distant countries, whose language not being understood by us, and, moreover, their mien, countenance, and dress being quite different from ours, which of us did not repute them savages and brutes?[1] Who did not attribute it to stupidity and want of common sense, to see them mute, ignorant of the French tongue, ignorant of our salutations, cringes, our port and behaviour, from which, of course, all human nature must take its pattern and example. All that seems strange to us, and what we do not understand we condemn. The same thing happens also in the judgment we make of beasts. They have several conditions like to ours; from those we may by comparison draw some conjecture: but of those qualities that are particular to them, how know we what to make of them? The horses, dogs, oxen, sheep, birds, and most of the animals that live amongst us, know our voices, and suffer themselves to be governed by them: so did Crassus' lamprey, that came when he called it[2]; as also do the eels that are in the lake Arethusa; and I have seen ponds where the fishes run to eat at a certain call of those who use to feed them:—

[1] See vol. ii., p. 29, *note*.

[2] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 24.

"Nomen habent, et ad magistri
Vocem quisque sui venit citatus"[1];

we may judge from that. We may also say that elephants have some share of religion,[2] forasmuch as, after several washings and purifications, they are observed to lift up their trunks like arms, and, fixing their eyes towards the rising sun, continue long in meditation and contemplation, at certain hours of the day of their own motion without instruction or precept. But because we do not see any such signs in other animals, we cannot thence conclude that they are without religion, nor form any judgment of what is concealed from us; as we discern something in this action[3] which the philosopher Cleanthes took notice of, because it something resembles our own: he saw, he says, ants go from their ant-hill, carrying the dead body of an ant towards another ant-hill, from which several other ants came out to meet them, as if to speak with them; whither, after having been some while together, the last returned, to consult, you may suppose, with their fellow-citizens, and so made two or three journeys, by reason of the difficulty of capitulation: in the conclusion, the last comers brought the first a worm out of their burrow, as it were for the ransom of the defunct, which the first laid upon their backs and carried home, leaving the dead body to the others. This was the interpretation that Cleanthes gave of this transaction, as manifesting that those creatures that have no voice are not, nevertheless, without mutual communication and dealings, whereof 'tis through our own defect that we do not participate, and for

[1] "Each has its own name, and comes at the master's call."—Martial, iv. 29, 6.

[2] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, viii. 1.

[3] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 12.

that reason foolishly take upon us to pass our judgment upon it. But they yet produce other effects much beyond our capacity, to which we are so far from being able to arrive by imitation, that we cannot so much as by imagination conceive them. Many are of opinion that in the great and last naval engagement that Antony lost to Augustus, his admiral galley was stayed in the middle of her course by the little fish the Latins call *Remora*, by reason of the property she has of staying all sorts of vessels to which she fastens herself.[1] And the Emperor Caligula, sailing with a great navy upon the coast of Romania, his galley alone was suddenly stayed by the same fish; which he caused to be taken, fastened as it was to the keel of his ship, very angry that such a little animal could resist at once the sea, the wind, and the force of all his oars, by being merely fastened by the beak to his galley (for it is a shell-fish); and was moreover, not without great reason, astonished that being brought to him in the long-boat it had no longer the strength it had in the water.[2] A citizen of Cyzicus formerly acquired the reputation of a good mathematician[3] from having learned the ways of the hedgehog: he has his burrow open in divers places and to several winds, and foreseeing the wind that is to come stops the hole on that side, which the citizen observing, gave the city certain prediction of the wind which was presently to blow. The cameleon takes his colour from the place upon

[1] Pliny, xxxii. 1. *Remora*, "delay, hindrance." This story about Antony is, of course, a fable, arising from the ignorant superstition which prevailed among the ancients, and even, as Montaigne shews, down to a much later period, respecting the power of this adhesive fish.

[2] Pliny, xxxii. 1.

[3] Or rather, perhaps, astrologer. Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 15.

which he is laid; but the polypus[1] gives himself what colour he pleases, according to occasion, either to conceal himself from what he fears, or from what he has a design to seize: in the cameleon 'tis a passive, but in the polypus 'tis an active change. We have some changes of colour, as in fear, anger, shame, and other passions, that alter our complexion; but it is by the effect of suffering, as with the cameleon. It is in the power of the jaundice, indeed, to make us turn yellow, but 'tis not in the power of our own will. Now these effects that we discern in other animals, much greater than our own, imply some more excellent faculty in them, unknown to us; as, 'tis to be presumed, are several other qualities and capacities of theirs of which no appearance reaches us.

Amongst all the predictions of elder times, the most ancient and the most certain were those taken from the flights of birds[2]; we have nothing like it, not anything so much to be admired. That rule and order of moving the wing, from which were prognosticated the consequences of future things, must of necessity be guided by some excellent means to so noble an operation: for to attribute this great effect to any natural disposition, without the intelligence, consent, and reason of the creature by which it is produced, is an opinion evidently false. And, in proof, the torpedo has this quality, not only to benumb all the members that touch her, but even through the nets to transmit a heavy dulness into the hands of those that move and handle them; nay, it is further said that, if one pour water upon her, he will feel this numbness mount up the water to the hand and stupefy the

[1] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 28.
[2] Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrr. Hyp.*, i. 14.

feeling through the water.[1] This is a miraculous force; but 'tis not useless to the torpedo; she knows it and makes use of it; for to catch the prey she desires she will bury herself in the mud that other fishes, swimming over her, struck and benumbed with this coldness of hers, may fall into her power. Cranes, swallows, and other birds of passage, by shifting their abode according to the seasons, sufficiently manifest the knowledge they have of their divining faculty, and put it in use. Huntsmen assure us that to cull out from amongst a great many puppies, that which ought to be preserved for the best, the simple way is to refer the choice to the dam, as thus: take them and carry them out of the kennel, and the first she brings back, will certainly be the best; or, if you make a show as if you would environ the kennel

[1] "Montaigne would mislead us here, or, rather, is misled himself; for, because the torpedo benumbs the members of those who touch it, and because the cranes, swallows, and the other birds of passage change their climate according to the seasons of the year, it by no means follows that the predictions, pretended to be derived from the flight of birds, are founded on certain faculties, which those birds have, of discovering things future to such as take the pains to watch their various motions. The vivacity of our author's genius has made him, in this place, confound things together that are very different. For the properties of the torpedo, cranes, and swallows appear from sensible effects; but the predictions said to be derived from the flight of certain birds, by virtue of the rule and method of the motion of their wings, are only founded upon human imaginations, the reality whereof was never proved; which have varied according to times and places, and which, at length, have lost all credit with the very people that were most possessed with them: but I am of opinion that Montaigne only makes use here of the divining faculty of the birds to puzzle those dogmatists who decide so positively that the animals have neither reason nor intellect; in this he has imitated Sextus Empiricus, in *Pyrr. Hypot.*, lib. i., cap. 14, p. 16, who, attacking the dogmatist on this very article, says expressly, 'That it cannot be denied, that the birds have the use of speech, and more penetration than we have; because, not only by their knowledge of the present, but also of things future, they discover the latter, to such as are capable of understanding them, by their voice, and several other means.'"—*Coste.*

with fire, the one she first catches up to save: by which it appears they have a sort of prognostic that we have not; or that they have some capacity in judging of their whelps other and clearer than we have.

The manner of coming into the world, of engendering, nourishing, acting, moving, living, and dying of beasts, is so near to ours, that whatever we retrench from their moving causes and add to our own condition above theirs, can by no means proceed from any meditation of our own reason. For the regimen of our health, physicians propose to us the example of the beasts' way of living; for this saying has in all times been in the mouth of the people:—

> "Tenez chaults les pieds et la teste;
> Au demourant vivez en beste."[1]

Generation is the principle of natural action. We have a certain disposition of members most proper and convenient for us in that affair: nevertheless, some order us to conform to the posture of brutes, as the most effectual:—

> "More ferarum,
> Quadrupedumque magis ritu, plerumque putantur
> Concipere uxores: quia sic loca sumere possunt,
> Pectoribus positis, sublatis, semina lumbis"[2];

and condemn as hurtful those indecent and indiscreet motions the women have superadded to the work; recalling them to the example and practice of the beasts of their own sex, more sober and modest:—

[1] "Keep warm your feet and head; as to the rest, live like a beast."

[2] Lucretius, iv. 1261. The sense is given in the text.

"Nam mulier prohibet se concipere atque repugnat,
Clunibus ipsa viri Venerem si læta retractet,
Atque exossato ciet omni pectore fluctus.
Ejicit enim sulci rectâ regione viâque
Vomerem, atque locis avertit seminis ictum."[1]

If it be justice to render to every one his due, the beasts that serve, love, and defend their benefactors, and that pursue and fall upon strangers and those who offend them, do in this represent a certain air of our justice: as also in observing a very equitable equality in the distribution of what they have to their young. As to friendship, they have it, without comparison, more vivid and constant than men have. King Lysimachus' dog, Hyrcanus,[2] his master being dead, lay upon his bed, obstinately refusing either to eat or drink, and the day that his body was burnt, he took a run and leaped into the fire, where he was consumed. As also did the dog of one Pyrrhus,[3] for he would not stir from off his master's bed from the time that he died; and when they carried him away let himself be carried with him, and at last leaped into the pile where they burnt his master's body. There are certain inclinations of affection which sometimes spring in us without the consultation of reason and by a fortuitous temerity, which others call sympathy: of this beasts are as capable as we. We see horses form an acquaintance with one another, that we have much ado to make them eat or travel when separated; we observe them to fancy a particular colour in those of their own kind, and where they meet it, run to it with great joy and demonstrations of goodwill, and to have a dislike and hatred for some other colour. Animals have choice, as well

[1] Lucretius, iv. 1266. The sense is given in the text.
[2] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 13. [3] Idem, *ibid.*

as we, in their amours, and cull out their mistresses; neither are they exempt from our extreme and implacable jealousies and envies.

Desires are either natural and necessary, as to eat and drink; or natural and not necessary, as the coupling with females; or neither natural nor necessary: of which last sort are almost all the desires of men; they are all superfluous and artificial; for 'tis not to be believed how little will satisfy nature, how little she has left us to desire; the dishes in our kitchens do not touch her ordinance; the Stoics say that a man may live on an olive a day; our delicacy in our wines is no part of her instruction, nor the over-charging the appetites of love:—

"Numquid ego a te
Magno prognatum deposco consule cunnum."[1]

These irregular desires, that ignorance of good and a false opinion have infused into us, are so many that they almost exclude all the natural, just as if there were so great a number of strangers in a city as to thrust out the natural inhabitants and, usurping their ancient rights and privileges, extinguish their authority and power. Animals are much more regular than we, and keep themselves with greater moderation within the limits nature has prescribed; but yet not so exactly, that they have not some analogy with our debauches; and as there have been known furious desires that have compelled men to the love of beasts, so there have been examples of beasts that have fallen in love with us, and admit monstrous affections betwixt different kinds: witness the elephant who was rival to Aristophanes the grammarian in the love of a young

[1] Horace, *Sat.*, i. 2, 69, as much as to say the maid's as good as the mistress.

flower-girl in the city of Alexandria, which was nothing behind him in all the offices of a very passionate suitor: for going through the market where they sold fruit, he would take some in his trunk and carry it to her: he would as much as possible keep her always in his sight, and would sometimes put his trunk under her kerchief into her bosom and felt her teats.[1] They tell also of a dragon in love with a maid; and of a goose enamoured of a child in the town of Asopus; of a ram that was a lover of the minstreless Glaucia[2]; and there are every day baboons furiously in love with women. We see also certain male animals that are fond of the males of their own kind. Oppianus[3] and others give us some examples of the reverence that beasts have to their kindred in their copulation[4]; but experience often shews us the contrary:—

> "Nec habetur turpe juvencæ
> Ferre patrem tergo; fit equo sua filia conjux;
> Quasque creavit, init pecudes caper, ipsaque cujus
> Semine concepta est, ex illo concepit ales."[5]

For malicious subtlety, can there be a more pregnant example than in the philosopher Thales's mule? He, laden with salt and fording a river,

[1] Plutarch, *On the Industry of Animals*, c. 17.
[2] Idem, *ibid.* [3] *Poem on Hunting*, i. 236.
[4] Of this there is a very remarkable instance, which I met in Varro *De Re Rusticâ*, lib. ii., c. 7. "As incredible as it may seem, it ought to be remembered that a stallion refusing absolutely to leap his mother, the groom thought fit to carry him to her with a cloth over his head, which blinded him, and by that means he forced him to cover her; but taking off the veil as soon as he got off her, the stallion furiously rushed upon him and bit him till he killed him."—Coste.
[5] "The heifer thinks it no shame to take her sire upon her back; the horse his daughter leaps; goats increase the herd by those they have begot; birds of all sorts live in common, and by the seed they were conceived conceive."—Ovid, *Metam.*, x. 325.

and by accident stumbling there, so that the sacks he carried were all wet, perceiving that by the melting of the salt his burthen was something lighter, never failed, so often as he came to any river, to lie down with his load; till his master, discovering the knavery, ordered that he should be laden with wool; wherein finding himself mistaken he ceased to practise that device.[1] There are several that are the very image of our avarice, for we see them infinitely solicitous to catch all they can and hide it with exceeding great care, though they never make any use of it at all. As to thrift, they surpass us not only in the foresight and laying up and saving for the time to come, but they have moreover a great deal of the science necessary thereto. The ants bring abroad into the sun their grain and seeds to air, refresh, and dry them, when they perceive them to mould and grow musty, lest they should decay and rot. But the caution and foresight they exhibit in gnawing their grains of wheat, surpass all imagination of human prudence: for by reason that the wheat does not always continue sound and dry, but grows soft, thaws and dissolves, as if it were steeped in milk, whilst hastening to germination, for fear lest it should shoot and lose the nature and property of a magazine for their subsistence, they nibble off the end by which it should shoot and sprout.

As to what concerns war, which is the greatest and most pompous of human actions, I would very fain know, whether we would use that for an argument of some prerogative, or, on the contrary, for a testimony of our weakness and imperfection; for, in truth, the science of undoing and killing one another, and of ruining and destroying our

[1] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 15; Ælian, *Hist. Anim.*, vii. 42.

own kind, has nothing in it so tempting as to make it coveted by beasts who have it not :—

> "Quando leoni
> Fortior eripuit vitam leo? quo nemore unquam
> Expiravit aper majoris dentibus apri?"[1]

yet are they not universally exempt; witness the furious encounters of bees, and the enterprises of the princes of the two opposite armies :—

> "Sæpe duobus
> Regibus incessit magno discordia motu;
> Continuoque animos vulgi et trepidantia bello
> Corda licet longe præsciscere."[2]

I never read this divine description but that, methinks, I there see human folly and vanity represented in their true and lively colours: for these preparations for war that so frighten and astound us with their noise and tumult, this rattle of guns, drums, and confused voices :—

> "Fulgur ubi ad cœlum se tollit, totaque circum
> Ære renidescit tellus, subterque virum vi
> Excitur pedibus sonitus, clamoreque montes
> Icti rejectant voces ad sidera mundi"[3];

in this dreadful embattling of so many thousands of armed men, and so great fury, ardour, and courage, 'tis pleasant to consider by what idle occasions they are excited, and by how light ones appeased :—

[1] "What stronger lion ever took the life from a weaker? or in what forest was a small boar slain by the teeth of a larger one?"—Juvenal, xv. 160.

[2] "Often, betwixt two kings, animosities arise with great commotion; then, straight, the common sort are heard from afar preparing for the war."—Virgil, *Georg.*, iv. 67.

[3] "When the glancing ray of arms rises heavenward, and the earth glows with beams of shining brass, and is trampled by horses and by men, and the rocks, struck by the various cries, reverberate the sounds to the skies."—Lucretius, ii. 325.

"Paridis propter narratur amorem
Græcia Barbariæ diro collisa duello"[1];

all Asia was ruined and destroyed for the ungoverned lust of one Paris: the envy of one single man, a despite, a pleasure or a domestic jealousy, causes that ought not to set two oyster wenches by the ears, is the soul and mover of all this mighty bustle. Shall we believe those who are themselves the principal authors of these mischiefs? Let us then hear the greatest and most victorious emperor that ever was making sport of, and with marvellous ingenuity turning into a jest, the many battles fought both by sea and land, the blood and lives of five hundred thousand men that followed his fortune, and the power and riches of two parts of the world, drained for the service of his expeditions:—

"Quod futuit Glaphyran Antonius, hanc mihi pœnam
Fulvia constituit, se quoque uti futuam.
Fulviam ego ut futuam? Quid, si me Manius oret
Pædicem, faciam? Non puto, si sapiam.
Aut futue, aut pugnemus, ait. Quid, si mihi vitâ
Charior est ipsa mentula? Signa canant."[2]

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[1] "By reason of Paris' love, Greece and the Barbarians (foreigners) engaged in dire warfare."—Horace, *Ep.*, i. 2, 6.

[2] Martial, x. 21. This epigram was composed by Augustus; but the Latin conveys such gross ideas that there would be no excuse for translating the lines without softening them. Even Florio omits his customary English paraphrase in doggerel rhyme. The following French version of Fontenelle, in his *Dialogues of the Dead*, lets us partly into Augustus's meaning:—

"Parce qu'Antoine est charmé de Glaphire,
Fulvie a ses beaux yeux me veut assujettir.
Antoine est infidele: Eh bien donc? Est-ce a dire
Que des fautes d'Antoine on me fera patir?
Qui? moy? que je serve Fulvie?
A ce compte on verroit se retirer vers moy
Mille Epouses mal satisfaites.
Aime moi, me dit elle, *ou combattons.* Mais quoy?
Elle est bien laide? Allons, sonnez trompettes!"—*Coste.*

(I use my Latin with the liberty of conscience you are pleased to allow me.) Now this great body, with so many fronts and motions as seem to threaten heaven and earth :—

> "Quam multi Lybico volvuntur marmore fluctus,
> Sævis ubi Orion hybernis conditur undis,
> Vel cum sole novo densæ torrentur aristæ,
> Aut Hermi campo, aut Lyciæ flaventibus arvis;
> Scuta sonant, pulsuque pedum tremit excita tellus"[1]:

this furious monster, with so many heads and arms, is yet man, feeble, calamitous, and miserable; 'tis but an ant-hill of ants disturbed and provoked :—

> "It nigrum campis agmen"[2]:

a contrary wind, the croaking of a flight of ravens, the stumble of a horse, the casual passage of an eagle, a dream, a voice, a sign, a morning mist, are any one of them sufficient to beat down and overturn him. Dart but a sunbeam in his face, he is melted and vanished: blow but a little dust in his eyes, as our poet says of the bees, and all our standards and legions, with the great Pompey himself at the head of them, are routed and crushed to pieces: for it was he, as I take it,[3] that Sertorius beat in Spain with those brave arms, which also served Eumenes against Antigonus, and Surenas against Crassus :—

[1] "As the innumerable waves that roll on the Lybian shore, when stormy Orion, winter returning, plunges into the waters; or as the golden ears, scorched by the summer's ray, on Hermus banks or fruitful Lycia, the bright shields dreadfully resound, and as the soldiers march, their footing shakes the ground."—*Æneid*, vii. 718.

[2] "The black troop marches to the field."—Virgil, *Æneid*, iv. 404.

[3] Here Montaigne had reason to be a little distrustful of his memory; for it was not against Pompey that Sertorius made use of this stratagem, but against the Caracitanians, a people of Spain, who lived in deep caves dug in a rock, where it was impossible to force them. See Plutarch, *Life of Sertorius*, cap. 6.

"Hi motus animorum, atque hæc certamina tanta,
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescent." [1]

Let us but slip our flies after them, and even these will have the force and the courage to disperse them. Within recent memory, the Portuguese besieging the city of Tamly, in the territory of Xiatine, the inhabitants of the place brought a number of hives, of which are great plenty in that place, upon the wall, and with fire drove the bees so furiously upon the enemy that they gave over the enterprise and trussed up their baggage, not being able to stand their attacks and stings; and so the city, by this new sort of relief, was freed from the danger with so wonderful a fortune, that at their return from the fight there was not found a single bee to tell the story.[2] The souls of emperors and cobblers are cast in the same mould; the weight and importance of the actions of princes considered, we persuade ourselves that they must be produced by some as weighty and important causes: but we are deceived; for they are pushed on and pulled back in their movements by the same springs that we are in our little matters: the same reason that makes us wrangle with a neighbour, causes a war betwixt princes; the same reason makes us whip a lacquey, befalling a king makes him ruin a whole province. They are as prompt and as easily moved as we, but they are able to do more mischief; in a gnat and an elephant the passion is the same.

[1] "These commotions of their minds, and this so mighty fray, quashed by the throw of a little dust, will cease."—Virgil, *Georgics*, iv. 86.

[2] Cotton has, "On their return from the pursuit they had not lost so much as one man." But the text has, "Au retour du combat il ne s'en trouva *une seule* a dire." Coste jocosely questions how Montaigne could have been in a position to determine this point.

As to what concerns fidelity, there is no animal in the world so treacherous as man. Our histories have recorded the eager pursuit that dogs have made after the murderers of their masters. King Pyrrhus, observing a dog that watched a dead man's body, and understanding that he had for three days together performed that office, commanded that the body should be buried, and took the dog along with him. One day, as he was at a general muster of his army, this dog saw his master's murderers, and with great barking and extreme signs of anger flew upon them, by this first accusation awaking the revenge of this murder, which was soon after perfected by form of justice.[1] As much was done by the dog of the sage Hesiod, which convicted the sons of Ganyctor of Naupactus of the murder committed on the person of his master.[2] Another dog, put to guard a temple at Athens, having spied a sacrilegious thief who carried away the finest jewels, fell to barking at him with all the force he had; but, the warders not awaking at the noise, he followed him, and, day being broken, kept off at a short distance, without losing sight of him; if he offered him anything to eat, he would not take it, but would wag his tail at all the passengers he met, and took whatever they gave him at their hands; and if the thief laid down to sleep, he likewise stayed upon the spot. The news of this dog having come to the warders of the temple, they put themselves upon the pursuit, inquiring as to the colour of the dog, and at last found him in the city of Cromyon, and the thief also, whom they brought back to Athens, where he had his reward: and the judges taking cognisance of this good office, ordered a

[1] Plutarch, *On the Industry of Animals*, c. 12. [2] Idem, *ibid.*

certain measure of corn for the dog's daily sustenance, at the public charge, and the priests to take care to it. Plutarch[1] delivers this story for a most certain truth, and as one that happened in the age wherein he lived.

As to gratitude (for it seems to me we had need bring this word into a little greater repute), this one example, which Apion[2] reports himself to have been an eyewitness of, shall suffice. "One day," says he, "that at Rome they entertained the people with the fighting of several strange beasts, and principally of lions of an unusual size, there was one amongst the rest who, by his furious deportment, by the strength and largeness of his limbs, and by his loud and dreadful roaring, attracted the eyes of all the spectators. Amongst the other slaves, that were presented to the people in this combat of beasts, there was one Androclus of Dacia, belonging to a Roman lord of consular dignity. This lion, having seen him at a distance, first made a sudden stop, as it were, in a wondering posture, and then softly approached nearer in a gentle and peaceable manner, as if it were to enter into acquaintance with him; this being done, and being now assured of what he sought, he began to wag his tail, as dogs do when they flatter their masters, and to kiss and lick the hands and thighs

[1] *Ubi suprâ*, c. 12.

[2] Aulus Gellius (lib. v., c. 14) has transmitted this story to us, on the credit of Apion: a learned man, says he, but whose great ostentation renders him, perhaps, too verbose in the narration of things, which he says he had heard or read: as to this fact, Apion relates, that he was an eyewitness of it at Rome; and Seneca (lib. ii., cap. 19) confirms it, in some measure, by these few words, "Leonem in amphitheatro spectavimus que unum bestiariis agnitum, quum quondam ejus fuisset magister, protexit ab impetu bestiarum." "We saw a lion in the amphitheatre, who, finding a man there condemned to fight with the beasts, who had formerly been his master, protected him from the fury of the other beasts."

of the poor wretch, who was beside himself and almost dead with fear. Androclus having, by this kindness of the lion, a little come to himself, and having taken so much heart as to consider and recognise him, it was a singular pleasure to see the joy and caresses that passed betwixt them. At which the people breaking into loud acclamations of joy, the emperor caused the slave to be called, to know from him the cause of so strange an event. He thereupon told him a new and a very wonderful story: my master, said he, being proconsul in Africa, I was constrained by his severity and cruel usage, being daily beaten, to steal from him and to run away. And to hide myself securely from a person of so great authority in the province, I thought it my best way to fly to the solitudes, sands, and uninhabitable parts of that country, resolved, in case the means of supporting life should fail me, to make some shift or other to kill myself. The sun being excessively hot at noon, and the heat intolerable, I found a retired and almost inaccessible cave, and went into it. Soon after there came in to me this lion with one foot wounded and bloody, complaining and groaning with the pain he endured: at his coming I was exceedingly afraid, but he having espied me hid in a corner of his den, came gently to me, holding out and showing me his wounded foot, as if he demanded my assistance in his distress. I then drew out a great splinter he had got there, and growing a little more familiar with him, squeezing the wound, thrust out the dirt and gravel that had got into it, wiped and cleansed it as well as I could. He, finding himself something better and much eased of his pain, lay down to repose, and presently fell asleep with his foot in my hand. From that

time forward, he and I lived together in this cave three whole years, upon the same diet; for of the beasts that he killed in hunting he always brought me the best pieces, which I roasted in the sun for want of fire, and so ate them. At last growing weary of this wild and brutish life, the lion being one day gone abroad to hunt for our ordinary provision, I escaped from thence, and the third day after was taken by the soldiers, who brought me from Africa to this city to my master, who presently condemned me to die, and to be exposed to the wild beasts. Now, by what I see, this lion was also taken soon after, who would now recompense me for the benefit and cure that he had received at my hands." This is the story that Androclus told the emperor, which he also conveyed from hand to hand to the people; wherefore at the universal request, he was absolved from his sentence and set at liberty; and the lion was, by order of the people, presented to him. We afterwards saw, says Apion, Androclus leading this lion, in nothing but a small leash, from tavern to tavern at Rome, and receiving what money everybody would give him, the lion being so gentle, as to suffer himself to be covered with the flowers that the people threw upon him, every one that met him: saying, There goes the lion that entertained the man; there goes the man that cured the lion.

We often lament the loss of the beasts we love, and so do they the loss of us:—

> "Post, bellator equus, positis insignibus, Æthon
> It lacrymans, guttisque humectat grandibus ora."[1]

As some nations have wives in common, and some others have every man his own: is not the same

[1] "Next, Æthon his warhorse came, without any of his trappings, and with heavy tears wets his cheeks."—*Æneid*, xi. 89.

evident amongst beasts, and marriages better kept than ours? As to the society and confederation they make amongst themselves to league themselves together, and to give one another mutual assistance, is it not manifest that oxen, hogs, and other animals, at the cry of any of their kind that we offend, all the herd run to his aid, and embody for his defence? When the fish scarus has swallowed the angler's hook, his fellows all crowd about him, and gnaw the line in pieces; and if by chance one be got into the net, the others present him their tails on the outside, which he holding fast with his teeth, they after that manner disengage and draw him out.[1] Mullets, when one of their companions is engaged, cross the line over their back, and with a fin they have there, indented like a saw, saw and cut it asunder.[2] As to the particular offices that we receive from one another for the service of life, there are several like examples amongst them. 'Tis said that the whale never moves that he has not always before him a little fish, like the sea-gudgeon, for this reason called the guide-fish, whom the whale follows, suffering himself to be led and turned with as great facility as the helm guides the ship: in recompense of which service, whereas all other things, whether beast or vessel, that enter into the dreadful gulf of this monster's mouth, are immediately lost and swallowed up, this little fish retires into it in great security, and there sleeps, during which time the whale never stirs; but so soon as it goes out, he immediately follows: and if by accident he lose sight of his little guide, he goes wandering here and there, and strikes his sides against the rocks, like a ship that has lost her rudder; which Plutarch[3] testifies to have seen off the Island of

[1] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 26. [2] Idem, *ibid.* [3] Idem, *ibid.*

Anticyra. There is a like society betwixt the little bird called a wren and a crocodile; the wren serves for a sentinel over this great animal; and if the ichneumon, his mortal enemy, approach to fight him, this little bird, for fear lest he should surprise him asleep, both with his voice and bill rouses him and gives him notice of his danger: he feeds on this monster's leavings, who receives him familiarly into his mouth, suffering him to peck in his jaws and betwixt his teeth, and thence to take out the bits of flesh that remain; and when he has a mind to shut his mouth, he first gives the bird warning to go out, by closing it by little and little, without bruising or doing it any harm at all.[1] The shell-fish called nacre[2] lives also in the same intelligence with the shrimp, a little animal of the lobster kind, serving him in the nature of usher and porter, sitting at the opening of the shell which the nacre keeps always gaping and open, till the shrimp sees some little fish proper for their prey within the hollow of the shell, and then it enters too, and pinches the nacre to the quick, so that she is forced to close her shell, where they two together devour the prey they have trapped into their fort.[3] In the manner of living of the tunnies we observe a singular knowledge of the three parts of mathematics: as to astrology, they teach it to men, for they stay in the place where they are surprised by the Brumal Solstice, and never stir thence till the next Equinox; for which reason Aristotle himself attributes to them this science; as to geometry and arithmetic, they always form their array in the figure of a cube, every way square, and make up the body of a

[1] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 26.
[2] The term is more usually applied to the mother-of-pearl.
[3] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 26, and Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, ii. 49.

battalion, solid, close, and environed with six equal sides; so that swimming in this square order, as large behind as before, whoever in seeing them can count one rank, may easily number the whole troop, by reason that the depth is equal to the breadth, and the breadth to the length.[1]

As to magnanimity, it will be hard to give a better instance of this than in the example of the great dog sent to Alexander the Great from India. They first brought him a stag to encounter, next a boar, and after that a bear; all these he slighted, and disdained to stir from his place; but when he saw a lion, he immediately roused himself, evidently manifesting that he declared that alone worthy to enter the lists with him.[2] As to what concerns repentance and acknowledgment of faults, 'tis reported of an elephant, that having, in the impetuosity of his rage, killed his keeper, he fell into so extreme a sorrow that he would never after eat, but starved himself to death.[3] And as to clemency, 'tis said of a tiger, the most inhuman of all beasts, that a kid having been put in to him, he suffered two days' hunger rather than hurt it, and on the third day broke the cage he was shut up in, to go seek elsewhere for prey, not choosing to fall upon the kid, his friend and guest.[4] And as to the laws of familiarity and agreement, formed by converse, it commonly occurs that we bring up cats, dogs, and hares tame together.

But that which seamen experimentally know, and particularly in the Sicilian sea, of the quality of the halcyons, surpasses all human thought: of what kind of animal has nature so highly honoured the hatching, birth, and production? The poets, indeed,

[1] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*.
[2] Idem, *ibid.*, c. 14.
[3] Arrian, *Hist. Indica.*, c. 14.
[4] Plutarch, *ubi suprâ*, c. 19.

say that the Island of Delos, which before was a floating island, was fixed for the service of Latona's lying-in; but the gods ordered that the whole ocean should be stayed, made stable and smoothed, without waves, without wind or rain, whilst the halcyon lays her eggs, which is just about the Solstice, the shortest day of the year, so that, by this halcyon's privilege, we have seven days and seven nights in the very heart of winter, wherein we may sail without danger. Their females never have to do with any other male but their own, whom they always accompany (without ever forsaking him) all their lives; if he happen to be weak and broken with age, they take him upon their shoulders, carry him from place to place, and serve him till death. But the most inquisitive into the secrets of nature could never yet arrive at the knowledge of the marvellous fabric wherewith the halcyon builds the nest for her little ones, nor guess at the matter. Plutarch,[1] who had seen and handled many of them, thinks it is the bones of some fish which she joins and binds together, interlacing them some lengthwise and others across, and adding ribs and hoops in such a manner that she forms, at last, a round vessel fit to launch, which being done, and the building finished, she carries it to the wash of the beach, where the sea beating gently against it, shows her where she is to mend what is not well jointed and knit, and where better to fortify the seams that are leaky and that open at the beating of the waves; and, on the contrary, what is well built and has had the due finishing, the beating of the waves so closes and binds together that it is not to be broken or cracked by blows, either of stone or iron, without very much ado.

[1] *Ubi suprâ.*

And that which is still more to be admired is the proportion and figure of the cavity within, which is composed and proportioned after such a manner as not possibly to receive or admit any other thing than the bird that built it; for to anything else it is so impenetrable, close, and shut, that nothing can enter, not so much as the water of the sea. This is a very clear description of this building, and borrowed from a very good hand; and yet methinks it does not give us sufficient light into the difficulty of this architecture. Now, from what vanity can it proceed to place lower than ourselves, and disdainfully to interpret effects that we can neither imitate nor comprehend?

To pursue a little further this equality and correspondence betwixt us and beasts: the privilege our soul so much glorifies herself upon of bringing all things she conceives to her own condition, of stripping all things that come to her of their mortal and corporal qualities, of ordering and placing the things she conceives worthy her taking notice of, divesting them of their corruptible qualities, and making them lay aside length, breadth, depth, weight, colour, smell, roughness, smoothness, hardness, softness, and all sensible incidents, as mean and superfluous vestments, to accommodate them to her own immortal and spiritual condition: the Paris, just as Rome and Paris, that I have in my soul, the Paris that I imagine, I imagine and conceive it without greatness and without place, without stone, without plaster, without wood: this very same privilege, I say, seems to be evidently in beasts: for a horse, accustomed to trumpets, the rattle of musket-shot and the bustle of battles, whom we see start and tremble in his sleep stretched upon his litter, as if he were in fight, it is certain that he

conceives in his soul the beat of the drum without noise, an army without arms and without body :—

> "Quippe videbis equos fortes, cum membra jacebunt
> In somnis, sudare tamen, spirareque sæpe,
> Et quasi de palmâ summas contendere vires."[1]

The hare that a harrier imagines in his dream, after which we see him so pant whilst he sleeps, so stretch out his tail, shake his legs, and perfectly represent all the motions of his course, is a hare without skin and without bones :—

> "Venantúmque canes in molli sæpe quiete
> Jactant crura tamen subitò, vocesque repente
> Mittunt, et crebras reducunt naribus auras,
> Ut vestigia si teneant inventa ferarum :
> Expergefactique sequuntur inania sæpe
> Cervorum simulacra, fugæ quasi dedita cernant ;
> Donec discussis redeant erroribus ad se."[2]

We often observe the watchdogs growl in their dreams and afterward bark out, and start up on a sudden, as if they perceived some stranger at hand : this stranger, that their soul discerns, is a spiritual and imperceptible man, without dimension, without colour, and without being :—

> "Consueta domi catulorum blanda propago
> Degere, sæpe levem ex oculis volucremque soporem
> Discutere, et corpus de terra corripere instant,
> Proinde quasi ignotas facies atque ora tuantur."[3]

As to beauty of the body, before I proceed any further, I would know whether or not we are

[1] "You shall see strong horses, however, when they lie down in sleep, often sweat, and snort, and seem as if, with all their force, they were striving to win the race."—Lucretius, iv. 988.

[2] "Hounds often in their quiet rest suddenly throw out their legs and bark, and breathe quick and short, as if they were in full chase upon a burning scent : nay, being waked, pursue visionary stags, as if they had them in real view, till at last, discovering the mistake, they return to themselves."—Idem, *ibid.*, 992.

[3] "Often our caressing house-dogs, shaking slumber from their eyes, will rise up suddenly, as if they see strange faces."—Idem, *ibid.*, 999.

agreed about the description. 'Tis likely we do not well know what beauty is in nature and in general, since to human and our own beauty we give so many diverse forms, of which were there any natural rule and prescription we should know it in common, as we do the heat of the fire. But we fancy its forms according to our own appetite and liking:—

"Turpis Romano Belgicus ore color."[1]

Indians paint it black and tawny, with great swollen lips, big flat noses, and load the cartilage betwixt the nostrils with great rings of gold to make it hang down to the mouth; as also the nether lip with great hoops, enriched with jewels, that weigh them down to fall upon the chin, it being with them a special grace to show their teeth even below the roots. In Peru, the greatest ears are the most beautiful, and they stretch them out as far as they can by art; and a man, now living, says that he has seen in an Eastern nation this care of enlarging them in so great repute, and the ear laden with such ponderous jewels, that he did with great ease put his arm, sleeve and all, through the bore of an ear. There are, elsewhere, nations that take great care to blacken their teeth, and hate to see them white; elsewhere, people that paint them red. Not only in Biscay, but in other places, the women are reputed more beautiful for having their heads shaved, and this, moreover, in certain frozen countries, as Pliny reports.[2] The Mexican women reckon among beauties a low forehead, and though they shave all other parts, they nourish hair on the forehead and increase it by art, and have large teats

[1] "The Belgic complexion is base in contrast to a Roman face."—Propertius, ii. 17, 26.

[2] Book vi., c. 13.

in such great reputation, that they make boast to give their children suck over their shoulders. We should paint deformity so. The Italians fashion beauty gross and massive: the Spaniards, gaunt and slender; and among us one makes it white, another brown: one soft and delicate, another strong and vigorous; one will have his mistress soft and gentle, another haughty and majestic. Just as the preference in beauty is given by Plato to the spherical figure, the Epicureans give it to the pyramidal or the square, and cannot swallow a god in the form of a ball.[1] But, be it how it will, nature has no more privileged us above her common laws in this than in the rest; and if we will judge ourselves aright, we shall find that if there be some animals less favoured in this than we, there are others, and in great number, that are more so:—

"A multis animalibus decore vincimur,"[2]

even of our terrestrial compatriots; for, as to those of the sea, setting the figure aside, which cannot fall into any manner of comparison, being so wholly another thing, in colour, cleanness, smoothness, and disposition, we sufficiently give place to them; and no less, in all qualities, to the aerial. And this prerogative that the poets make such a mighty matter of, our erect stature, looking towards heaven, our original:—

"Pronaque cum spectent animalia cætera terram,
Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus,"[3]

is merely poetical; for there are several little beasts that have their sight absolutely turned towards

[1] Plato, *Timæus.*

[2] "Many animals surpass us in beauty."—Seneca, *Epist.*, 124.

[3] "Whereas other animals bow their prone looks to the earth, he gave it to men to look erect, to behold the heavenly arch."—Ovid, *Met.*, i. 84.

heaven; and I find the countenance of camels and ostriches much higher raised, and more erect than ours. What animals have not their faces forward and in front, and do not look just as we do, and do not in their natural posture discover as much of heaven and earth as man? And what qualities of our bodily constitution, in Plato and Cicero, may not indifferently serve a thousand sorts of beasts? Those that most resemble us are the ugliest and most abject of all the herd; for, as to outward appearance and form of visage, such are the baboons and monkeys:—

"Simia quam similis, turpissima bestia, nobis?"[1]

and, for the internal and vital parts, the hog. In earnest, when I imagine man stark naked, even that sex that seems to have the greatest share of beauty, his defects, natural subjections, and imperfections, I find that we have more reason than any other animal to cover ourselves. We are readily to be excused for borrowing of those creatures to which nature has in this been kinder than to us, to trick ourselves with their beauties and hide ourselves under their spoils—their wool, feathers, hair, silk. Let us observe, as to the rest, that man is the sole animal whose nudities offend his own companions, and the only one who, in his natural actions, withdraws and hides himself from his own kind. And really, 'tis also an effect worth consideration, that they, who are masters in the trade, prescribe as a remedy for amorous passions the full and free view of the body a man desires; so that, to cool his ardour, there needs no more but full liberty to see and contemplate what he loves:—

[1] "How like to us is that basest of beasts, the ape?"—Ennius, ap. Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, lib. i.

"Ille quod obscœnas in aperto corpore partes
Viderat, in cursu qui fuit, hæsit amor"[1]:

and although this recipe may, peradventure, proceed from a refined and cold humour, it is, notwithstanding, a very great sign of our weakness, that use and acquaintance should disgust us with one another.

It is not modesty so much as cunning and prudence, that makes our ladies so circumspect in refusing us admittance to their closets, before they are painted and tricked up for public view:—

"Nec Veneres nostras hoc fallit; quo magis ipsæ
Omnia summopere hos vitæ postscenia celant,
Quos retinere volunt, adstrictoque esse in amore"[2]:

whereas in several animals there is nothing that we do not love, and that does not please our senses; so that from their very excrements we not only extract wherewith to heighten our sauces, but also our richest ornaments and perfumes. This discourse reflects upon none but the ordinary sort of women, and is not so sacrilegious as to seek to comprehend those divine, supernatural, and extraordinary beauties, whom we occasionally see shining amongst us like stars under a corporeal and terrestrial veil.

As to the rest, the very share that we allow to beasts of the bounty of nature, by our own confession, is very much to their advantage; we attribute to ourselves imaginary and fantastic goods, future and absent goods, for which human

[1] "He that in full ardour has disclosed to him the secret parts of his mistress in open view, flags in his hot career."—Ovid, *De Rem. Amor.*, v. 429.

[2] "Nor does this escape our beauties, insomuch that they with such care behind the scenes remove all those defects that may check the flame of their lovers."—Lucretius, iv. 1182.

capacity cannot, of herself, be responsible; or goods that we falsely attribute to ourselves by the licence of opinion, as reason, knowledge, and honour; and leave to them, for their share, essential, manageable, and palpable goods, as peace, repose, security, innocence, and health: health, I say, the fairest and richest present that nature can make us. Insomuch that philosophy, even the Stoic,[1] is so bold as to say that Heraclitus and Pherecides, could they have exchanged their wisdom for health, and had delivered themselves, the one of his dropsy and the other of the lice disease that tormented him, by the bargain they had done well. By which they set a still greater value upon wisdom, comparing and putting it in the balance with health, than they do in this other proposition, which is also theirs: they say that if Circe had presented to Ulysses two potions, the one to make a fool become a wise man, and the other to make a wise man become a fool, Ulysses ought rather to have chosen the last than to consent that Circe should change his human figure into that of a beast; and say that wisdom itself would have spoken to him after this manner: "Forsake me, let me alone, rather than lodge me under the figure and body of an ass." How, then, will the philosophers abandon this great and divine wisdom for this corporal and terrestrial covering? it is then not by reason, by discourse, by the soul, that we excel beasts: 'tis by our beauty, our fair complexion, our fine symmetry of parts, for which we must quit our intelligence, our prudence, and all the rest. Well, I accept this frank and free confession: certainly, they knew that those parts upon which we so much value ourselves are no other

[1] Plutarch, *On the Common Conceptions against the Stoics*, c. 8.

than vain fancy. If beasts, then, had all the virtue, knowledge, wisdom and Stoical perfection, they would still be beasts, and would not be comparable to man, miserable, wicked, insensate man. For, in fine, whatever is not as we are is nothing worth; and God Himself to procure esteem amongst us must put Himself into that shape, as we shall show anon: by which it appears that it is not upon any true ground of reason, but by a foolish pride and vain opinion, that we prefer ourselves before other animals, and separate ourselves from their condition and society.

But, to return to what I was upon before, we have for our part inconstancy, irresolution, incertitude, sorrow, superstition, solicitude about things to come even after we shall be no more, ambition, avarice, jealousy, envy, irregular, frantic, and untameable appetites, war, lying, disloyalty, detraction, and curiosity. Doubtless, we have strangely overpaid this fine reason upon which we so much glorify ourselves, and this capacity of judging and knowing, if we have bought it at the price of this infinite number of passions to which we are eternally subject: unless we shall yet think fit, as Socrates does,[1] to add this notable prerogative above beasts, that whereas nature has prescribed to them certain seasons and limits for the delights of Venus, she has given us the reins at all hours and seasons:—

"Ut vinum ægrotis, quia prodest rarò, nocet sæpissime, melius est non adhibere omnino, quàm, spe dubiæ salutis, in apertam perniciem incurrere: sic haud scio, an melius fuerit humano generi motum istum celerum cogitationis, acumen, solertiam, quam rationem vocamus, quoniam pestifera sint multis, admodum paucis salutaria, non dari omninò, quam tam munifice et tam large dari."[2]

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[1] Xenophon, *Mem. on Socrates*, i. 4, 12.

[2] "As it falls out that wine seldom benefits the sick man, and very often injures him, it is better not to give them any at all than out of

Of what advantage can we conceive the knowledge of so many things was to Varro and Aristotle? Did it exempt them from human inconveniences? Were they by it freed from the accidents that lie heavy upon the shoulders of a porter? Did they extract from their logic any consolation for the gout? or, from knowing that this humour is lodged in the joints, did they feel it the less? Did they enter into composition with death by knowing that some nations rejoice at his approach? or with cuckoldry, by knowing that in some part of the world wives are in common? On the contrary, having been reputed the greatest men for knowledge, the one amongst the Romans and the other amongst the Greeks, and in a time when learning most flourished, we have not heard, nevertheless, that they had any particular excellence in their lives: nay, the Greek had enough to do to clear himself from some notable blemishes in his. Have we observed that pleasure and health have had a better relish with him who understands astrology and grammar than with others?

"Illiterati num minus nervi rigent?"[1]

and shame and poverty less troublesome?

"Scilicet et morbis et debilitate carebis,
Et luctum et curam effugies, et tempora vitæ
Longa tibi post hæc fato meliore dabuntur."[2]

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hope of an uncertain benefit to incur a sure mischief: so I know not whether it had not been better for mankind that this quick motion, this acumen of imagination, this subtlety, that we call reason, had not been given to man at all; since what harms many, and benefits few, had better have not been bestowed, than bestowed with so prodigal a hand."—Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, iii. 27.

[1] "Do the veins of the illiterate swell less freely?"—Horatius, *Epod.*, viii. v. 17.

[2] "Thou shalt be free from disease and infirmity, and avoid care and sorrow; and thy life shall be prolonged, and with better days."—Juvenal, xiv. 156.

I have known in my time a hundred artisans, a hundred labourers, wiser and more happy than the rectors of the university, and whom I had much rather have resembled. Learning, methinks, has its place amongst the necessary things of life, as glory, nobility, dignity, or, at the most, as beauty, riches, and such other qualities, which, indeed, are useful to it; but remotely and more by fantasy than by nature. We need scarcely more offices, rules, and laws of living in our society than cranes and emmets do in theirs; and yet we see that these live very regularly without erudition. If man were wise, he would take the true value of everything according as it was most useful and proper to his life. Whoever will number us by our actions and deportments, will find many more excellent men amongst the ignorant than among the learned: ay, in all sorts of virtue. The old Rome seems to me to have been of much greater value, both for peace and war, than that learned Rome that ruined itself; and though all the rest should be equal, yet integrity and innocence would remain to the ancients, for they inhabit singularly well with simplicity. But I will leave this discourse that would lead me farther than I am willing to follow; and shall only say this farther: 'tis only humility and submission that can make a complete good man. We are not to leave to each man's own judgment the knowledge of his duty; we are to prescribe it to him, and not suffer him to choose it at his own discretion: otherwise, according to the imbecility and infinite variety of our reasons and opinions, we should at last forge for ourselves duties that would (as Epicurus[1] says) enjoin us to eat one another.

The first law that ever God gave to man was a

[1] Or rather, the Epicurean Colotes.

law of pure obedience: it was a commandment naked and simple, wherein man had nothing to inquire after or to dispute, forasmuch as to obey is the proper office of a rational soul, acknowledging a heavenly superior and benefactor. From obedience and submission spring all other virtues, as all sin does from self-opinion. And, on the contrary, the first temptation that by the devil was offered to human nature, its first poison, insinuated itself by the promises that were made to us of knowledge and wisdom:—

"Eritis sicut dii, scientes bonum et malum."[1]

And the Syrens, in Homer,[2] to allure Ulysses and draw him within the danger of their snares, offered to give him knowledge. The plague of man is the opinion of wisdom; and for this reason it is that ignorance is so recommended to us by our religion, as proper to faith and obedience:—

"Cavete, ne quis vos decipiat per philosophiam et inanes seductiones, secundum elementa mundi."[3]

There is in this a general consent amongst all sects of philosophers, that the sovereign good consists in the tranquillity of the soul and body: but where shall we find it?—

"Ad summam, sapiens uno minor est Jove, dives,
Liber, honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum:
Præcipue sanus, nisi cum pituita molesta est."[4]

[1] "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."—*Genesis*, iii. 5.

[2] *Odyssey*, xii. 188.

[3] "Take heed lest any man deceive you by philosophy and vain seductions according to the first principles of the world."—St. Paul, *Colossians*, ii. 8. Montaigne does not quote Genesis faithfully, for there it is the serpent which inculcates the benefits of a knowledge of good and evil.

[4] "He that is wise is one degree inferior only to Jove; free, honoured, fair, in short, a king of kings; above all, in health, unless when the phlegm is troublesome."—Horatius, *Ep.*, i. 1., 106.

It seems, in truth, that nature, for the consolation of our miserable and wretched state, has only given us presumption for our inheritance; 'tis, as Epictetus says,[1] "that man has nothing properly his own, but the use of his opinions"; we have nothing but wind and smoke for our portion. The gods have health in essence, says philosophy, and sickness in intelligence; man, on the contrary, possesses his goods by fancy, his ills in essence. We have had reason to magnify the power of our imagination, for all our goods are only in dream. Hear this poor calamitous animal huff: "There is nothing," says Cicero, "so charming as the occupation of letters; of those letters, I say, by means whereof the infinity of things, the immense grandeur of nature, the heavens, even in this world, the earth, and the seas are discovered to us. 'Tis they that have taught us religion, moderation, the grandeur of courage, and that have rescued our souls from obscurity, to make her see all things, high, low, first, middle, last, and 'tis they that furnish us wherewith to live happily and well, and conduct us to pass over our lives without displeasure and without offence."[2] Does not this man seem to speak of the condition of the ever-living and almighty God? Yet, as to the effect, a thousand little country-women have lived lives more equal, more sweet and constant than his:—

> "Deus ille fuit, deus, inclyte Memmi,
> Qui princeps vitæ rationem invenit eam quæ
> Nunc appellatur sapientia; quique per artem
> Fluctibus e tantis vitam, tantisque tenebris,
> In tam tranquilla et tam clara luce locavit."[3]

[1] *Manual*, c. ii. [2] Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, i. 26.

[3] "That god, great Memmus, was a god indeed, who first found out that *rationale* of life which is now called wisdom; and who by such art removed life from its tempests and darkness into so calm and clear a light."—Lucretius, v. 81.

Here are very fine, very brave words; but a very light accident put this same man's understanding in a worse condition than that of the meanest shepherd,[1] notwithstanding this instructing God, this divine wisdom. Of the same stamp of impudence is the promise of Democritus's book, "I am going to speak of all things"[2]; and that foolish title that Aristotle prefixes to one of his, "of the mortal gods,"[3] and the judgment of Chrysippus, "that Dion was as virtuous as God"[4]; and my friend Seneca does indeed acknowledge that God has given him life, but that to live well is his own, conformably with this other:—

"In virtute vere gloriamur; quod non contingeret, si id donum a Deo, non a nobis, haberemus"[5];

this is also Seneca's saying, "That the wise man has fortitude equal with God; but in human frailty, wherein he surpasses Him."[6] There is nothing so ordinary as to meet with sallies of the like temerity; there is none of us who takes so much offence to see himself equalled to God, as he does to see himself undervalued by being ranked with other animals; so much more are we jealous of our own interest, than of that of our Creator. But we must trample under foot this foolish vanity, and briskly and boldly shake the ridiculous foundations upon which these false opinions are

[1] "This was Lucretius who, in the verses preceding this period, speaks so pompously of Epicurus and his doctrine: for a love potion, that was given him either by his wife or his mistress, so much disturbed his reason, that the violence of his disorder only afforded him a few lucid intervals, which he employed in composing his book, and at last made him kill himself. Eusebius's *Chronicon*."—Coste.

[2] Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 23. [3] Idem, *De Finibus*, ii. 13.

[4] Plutarch, *On the Common Conceptions of the Stoics.*

[5] "We truly glory in our virtue, which would not be if we had it as a gift from God and not from ourselves."—Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, iii. 36. [6] *Ep.*, 53, *sub fin.*

based. So long as man shall believe he has any means and power of himself, he will never acknowledge what he owes to his Master; his eggs shall always be chickens, as the saying is; we must therefore strip him to his shirt. Let us see some notable example of the effect of his philosophy. Posidonius, being tormented with a disease so painful as made him writhe his arms and gnash his teeth, thought he sufficiently baffled the pain by crying out against it: "Thou dost exercise thy malice to much purpose; I will not confess that thou art an evil."[1] He is as sensible of the pain as my lacquey; but he mightily values himself upon bridling his tongue at least, and restraining it within the laws of his sect:—

"Re succumbere non oportebat, verbis gloriantem."[2]

Arcesilaus, being ill of the gout, and Carneades coming to see him, was returning, troubled at his condition; the other calling back and showing him his feet and then his breast: "There is nothing come from these hither,"[3] said he. This has somewhat a better grace, for he feels himself in pain, and would be disengaged from it; but his heart, notwithstanding, is not conquered or enfeebled by it; the other stands more obstinately to his work, but, I fear, rather verbally than really. And Dionysius Heracleotes, afflicted with a vehement smarting in his eyes, was reduced to quit these stoical resolutions.[4] But, though knowledge

[1] Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, ii. 25.

[2] "It did not belong to him, vaunting in words, to give way to the thing itself."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, ii. 13.

[3] Cicero, *De Finibus*, v. 31.

[4] Idem, *ibid.* "Cicero says elsewhere (*Tusc. Quæs.*, ii. 25), that this philosopher, having a disorder in his kidneys, exclaimed aloud, that the notion which he had before conceived of pain was false."—Coste.

could in effect do, as they say, and could blunt the point and dull the edge of the misfortunes that attend us, what does she more than what ignorance does more simply and evidently? The philosopher Pyrrho, being at sea in very great danger by reason of a mighty storm, presented nothing to those who were with him to imitate in this extremity but the security of a hog they had on board, that was looking at the tempest quite unconcerned.[1] Philosophy, when she has said all she can, refers us at last to the example of a wrestler or a muleteer, in which sort of people we commonly observe much less apprehension of death or sense of pain and other infirmities, and more endurance, than ever knowledge furnished any one with who was not born to those infirmities, and of himself prepared for them by a natural habit.[2] What is the cause that we make incisions and cut the tender limbs of an infant, and those of a horse, more easily than our own, but ignorance only? How many has mere force of imagination made ill. We often see men cause themselves to be let blood, purged, and physicked, to be cured of diseases they only feel in opinion. When real infirmities fail us, knowledge lends us hers: that colour, this complexion, portends some catarrhous defluxion; this hot season threatens us with a fever: this breach in the lifeline of your left hand gives you notice of some near and notable indisposition: and at last it roundly attacks health itself, saying, this sprightliness and vigour of youth cannot continue in this posture, there must be blood taken, and the fever abated, lest it turn

[1] "A previous knowledge of evils rather sharpens than modifies the sense of them."—Ed. of 1588.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, ix. 69.

to your prejudice. Compare the life of a man subject to such imaginations with that of a labourer who suffers himself to be led by his natural appetite, measuring things only by the present sense, without knowledge and without prognostics—who is only ill when he is ill; whereas the other has the stone in his soul before he has it in his bladder; as if it were not time enough to suffer evil when it shall come, he must anticipate it by fancy and run to meet it. What I say of physic may generally serve as example in other sciences: and hence is derived that ancient opinion of the philosophers,[1] who placed the sovereign good in discerning the weakness of our judgment. My ignorance affords me as much occasion of hope as of fear; and having no other rule of my health than that of the examples of others, and of events I see elsewhere upon the like occasion, I find of all sorts, and rely upon the comparisons that are most favourable to me. I receive health with open arms, free, full, and entire, and by so much the more whet my appetite to enjoy it, by how much it is at present less ordinary and more rare: so far am I from troubling its repose and sweetness, with the bitterness of a new and constrained manner of living. Beasts sufficiently shew us how much the agitation of the soul brings infirmities and diseases upon us. That which is told us of the people of Brazil, that they never die but of old age, is attributed to the serenity and tranquillity of the air they live in; but I attribute it to the serenity and tranquillity of their soul, free from all passion, thought, or employments, continuous or unpleasing, as people that pass over their lives in an admirable simplicity and

[1] The Sceptics.

ignorance, without letters, without law, without king, or any manner of religion. Whence comes this which we find by experience, that the coarsest and most rough-hewn clowns are the most able and the most to be desired in amorous performances, and that the love of a muleteer often renders itself more acceptable than that of a gentleman, if it be not that the agitation of the soul in the latter disturbs his corporal ability, dissolves and tires it, as it also troubles and tires itself? What more usually puts the soul beside herself, and throws her into madness, than her own promptness, vigour, and agility—in short, her own proper force? Of what is the most subtle folly made, but of the most subtle wisdom? As great friendships spring from great enmities, and vigorous healths from mortal diseases: so from the rare and quick agitations of our souls proceed the most wonderful and wildest frenzies; 'tis but a half turn of the toe from the one to the other.[1] In the actions of madmen, we see how nearly madness resembles the most vigorous operations of the soul. Who does not know how indiscernible the difference is betwixt madness and the gay flights of a sprightly soul, and the effects of a supreme and extraordinary virtue? Plato says, that melancholic persons are the most capable of discipline and the most excellent; nor, indeed, is there in any so great a propension to madness. Infinite wits are ruined by their own proper force and suppleness: to what a condition, through his own excitable fancy, has one of the most judicious, ingenious, and best-formed to the ancient and

[1] "Great wits to madness, sure, are near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."—*Dryden.*

This is a famous couplet, and as poor as it is famous.

true poesy, of any of the Italian poets[1] lately fallen! Has he not great obligation to this fatal vivacity, to this light that has blinded him? to this exact and subtle apprehension of reason, that has put him beside his reason, to his close and laborious search after the sciences, that has reduced him to stupidity, to that rare aptitude to the exercises of the soul, that has rendered him without exercise and without soul? I had more chagrin, if possible, than compassion, to see him at Ferrara[2] in so pitiful a condition surviving himself, forgetting both himself and his works, which, without his knowledge, though before his face, have been published, deformed and incorrect.

Would you have a man sound, would you have him regular, and in a steady and secure posture? muffle him up in the shades of stupidity and sloth. We must be made beasts to be made wise, and hoodwinked before we can govern ourselves. And if one shall tell me that the advantage of having a cold and blunted sense of pain and other evils, brings this disadvantage along with it, to render us, consequently, less eager and sensible also in the fruition of goods and pleasures; this is true: but the misery of our condition is such that we have not so much to enjoy as to avoid, and that the extremest pleasure does not affect us to the degree that a light grief does:—

"Segnius homines bona quam mala sentiunt."[3]

We are not so sensible of the most perfect health, as we are of the least sickness:—

[1] Tasso.
[2] In November 1580.
[3] "Men are less sensitive to pleasure than to pain."—Livy, xxx. 21.

"Pungit
In cute vix summa violatum plagula corpus;
Quando valere nihil quemquam movet. Hoc juvat unum
Quod me non torquet latus, aut pes: cætera quisquam
Vix queat aut sanum sese, aut sentire valentem."[1]

Our well-being is nothing but the privation of ill-being; and this is the reason why that sect of philosophers which sets the greatest value upon pleasure, has fixed it chiefly in insensibility of pain. To be free from ill is the greatest good that man can hope for, as Ennius says:—

"Nimium boni est, cui nihil est mali"[2];

for that very tickling and sting which are in certain pleasures, and that seem to raise us above simple health and insensibility: that active, moving, and, I know not how, itching and biting pleasure, even that very pleasure itself looks to nothing but apathy as its mark. The lust, that carries us headlong to women's embraces, is directed to no other end but only to cure the torment of our ardent and furious desires, and only requires to be glutted and laid at rest, and delivered from that fever; and so of the rest. I say then that, if simplicity conducts us to a state free from evil, it leads us to a very happy one, according to our condition. And yet we are not to imagine it so leaden an insensibility as to be totally without sense: for Crantor had very good reason to controvert the insensibility of Epicurus, if founded so deep that the very first attack and birth of evils were not to be perceived. "I do not approve such an insensibility as is neither possible

[1] "The body is vexed with a little sting that scarcely penetrates the skin, while the most perfect health is not perceived. This only pleases me, that neither side nor foot is plagued; except these, scarce any one can tell, whether he's in health or no."—La Boetie, *Poemata*.
[2] Ennius, ap. Cicero, *De Finib.*, ii. 13.

nor to be desired: I am well content not to be sick; but, if I am, I would know that I am so; and if a caustic be applied or incisions made in any part, I would feel them."[1] In truth, whoever would take away the knowledge and sense of evil, would, at the same time, eradicate the sense of pleasure, and, in short, annihilate man himself:—

"Istud nihil dolere, non sine magna mercede contingit immanitatis in animo, stuporis in corde."[2]

Evil appertains to man in its turn; neither is pain always to be avoided, nor pleasure always pursued.

'Tis a great advantage to the honour of ignorance that knowledge itself throws us into its arms when she finds herself puzzled to fortify us against the weight of evils; she is constrained to come to this composition, to give us the reins, and permit us to fly into the lap of the other, and to shelter ourselves under her protection from the strokes and injuries of fortune. For what else is her meaning when she instructs us to divert our thoughts from the ills that press upon us, and entertain them with the meditation of pleasures past and gone; to comfort ourselves in present afflictions with the remembrance of fled delights, and to call to our succour a vanished satisfaction, to oppose it to what lies heavy upon us?—

"Levationes ægritudinum in avocatione a cogitandâ molestiâ, et revocatione ad contemplandas voluptates ponit."[3]

If it be not that where power fails her she will supply it with policy, and make use of a supple

[1] Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, iii. 7.

[2] "An insensibility, that is not to be purchased but at the price of the humanity of the soul and of stupidity in the body."—Idem, *ibid.*, vi.

[3] "The way to dissipate present grief is to recall to contemplation past pleasures."—Idem, *ibid.*, iii. 15.

trip, when force of limbs will not serve the turn? For not only to a philosopher, but to any man in his right wits, when he has upon him the thirst of a burning fever, what satisfaction can it be to remember the pleasure of drinking Greek wine? it would rather be to make matters worse:—

"Che ricordarsi il ben doppia la noja."[1]

Of the same stamp is the other counsel that philosophy gives; only to remember past happiness and to forget the troubles we have undergone[2]; as if we had the science of oblivion in our power: 'tis a counsel for which we are never a straw the better:—

"Suavis laborum est præteritorum memoria."[3]

How? Is philosophy, that should arm me to contend with fortune, and steel my courage to trample all human adversities under foot, arrived at this degree of cowardice, to make me hide my head and save myself by these pitiful and ridiculous shifts? for the memory represents to us not what we choose but what it pleases; nay, there is nothing that so much imprints anything in our memory as a desire to forget it: and 'tis a sure way to retain and keep anything safe in the soul, to solicit her to lose it. This is false:—

"Est situm in nobis, ut et adversa quasi perpetuâ oblivione obruamus, et secunda jucunde et suaviter meminerimus"[4];

[1] "The remembrance of pleasure doubles the sense of present pain."

[2] Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, iii. 15.

[3] "The memory of past toils is sweet."—Euripides, ap. Cicero, *De Finib.*, ii. 32.

[4] "And it is placed in our power to bury, as it were, in a perpetual oblivion adverse accidents, and to retain a pleasant and delightful memory of our successes."—Idem, *ibid.*, i. 17.

and this is true :—

"Memini etiam quæ nolo : oblivisci non possum quæ volo."[1]

And whose counsel is this? his :—

"Qui se unus sapientem profiteri sit ausus"[2] :—

"Qui genus humanum ingenio superavit, et omnes
Præstinxit, stellas exortus uti ætherius sol."[3]

To empty and disfurnish the memory, is not this the true and proper way to ignorance?—

"Iners malorum remedium ignorantia est."[4]

We find several other like precepts whereby we are permitted to borrow from the vulgar frivolous appearances where reason, in all her vivacity and vigour, cannot do the feat, provided they administer satisfaction and comfort; where they cannot cure the wound, they are content to palliate and benumb it. I believe they will not deny me this, that if they could establish order and constancy in a state of life that could maintain itself in ease and pleasure by some debility of judgment, they would accept it :—

"Potare, et spargere flores
Incipiam, patiarque vel inconsultus haberi."[5]

There would be a great many philosophers of Lycas' mind: this man being otherwise of very regular manners, living quietly and contentedly in

[1] "I even remember what I would not; but I cannot forget what I would."—Cicero, *De Finib.*, i. 32.

[2] "Who alone dares to profess himself a wise man (Epicurus)."—Idem, *ibid.*, ii. 3.

[3] "Who all mankind surpassed in genius, effacing them as the rising sun puts out the stars."—Lucretius, iii. 1056.

[4] "Ignorance is but a dull remedy for evils."—Seneca, *Œdip.*, act., iii. 7.

[5] "I will begin to drink and strew flowers, and will suffer to be thought mad."—Horace, *Ep.*, i. 5, 14.

his family, and not failing in any office of his duty, either towards his own people or strangers, and very carefully preserving himself from hurtful things, was nevertheless, by some distemper in his brain, possessed with a conceit that he was perpetually in the theatre, viewing the several entertainments, and enjoying the amusements and the shows and the best comedies in the world; and being cured by the physicians of his frenzy, had much ado to forbear endeavouring by process of law to compel them to restore him again to his pleasing imaginations :—

> "Pol! me occidistis, amici,
> Non servastis, ait; cui sic extorta voluptas,
> Et demptus per vim mentis gratissimus error"[1]:

with a madness like that of Thrasyllus, son of Pythodorus, who had grown to believe that all the ships that weighed anchor from the port of Piræus and that came into the haven, only made their voyages for his profit, congratulating himself on their happy navigation, and receiving them with the greatest joy. His brother Crito having caused him to be restored to his better understanding, he infinitely regretted that sort of condition wherein he had lived with so much delight and free from all anxiety.[2] 'Tis according to the old Greek verse, "that there is a great deal of convenience in not being so prudent" :—

> Ἐν τῷ φρονεῖν γὰρ μηδὲν ἥδιστος βίος.[3]

[1] "By heaven! you have killed me, my friends, not saved me, he said; my dear delights and pleasing error by my returning sense are taken from me."—Horace, *Ep.*, ii., 2, 138.

[2] Athenæus, book xii.; Ælian, *Var. Hist.*, iv. 25. This appears to be Thrasyllus, the celebrated Athenian military and naval commander, fifth century B.C.

[3] Sophocles, *Ajax*, ver. 552.

And Ecclesiastes,[1] "In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

Even that to which philosophy consents in general, that last remedy which she applies to all sorts of necessities, to put an end to the life we are not able to endure :—

"Placet? pare. Non placet? quacunque vis, exi. . . . Pungit dolor? vel fodiat sane : si nudus es, da jugulum : sin tectus armis Vulcaniis, id est fortitudine, resiste"[2];

and these words so used in the Greek festivals :—

"Aut bibat, aut abeat[3]";

that sound better upon the tongue of a Gascon, who naturally changes the *b* into *v*, than upon that of Cicero[4] :—

"Vivere si recte nescis, decede peritis.
Lusisti satis, edisti satis, atque bibisti;
Tempus abire tibi est, ne potum largius æquo
Rideat, et pulset lasciva decentius ætas."[5]

What is it other than a confession of his impotency, and a retreating not only to ignorance, to be there

[1] Chap. i. 18.

[2] "Does it please? bear it. Not please? go out, how thou wilt. Does grief prick thee? nay, if it stab thee too : if thou art weaponless, present thy throat : if covered with the arms of Vulcan, that is fortitude, resist it."—Adapted from Seneca, *Ep.*, 70, and Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, ii. 14.

[3] "Let him drink or go."—Cicero, *ubi suprâ*, v. 41.

[4] "This remark upon the Gascon pronunciation, which chooses to alter *b* into *v*, is only to be applied to the word *bibat*, otherwise it would not be very properly intended here; because, if the *b* in the word *abeat* was changed into *v*, it would mar the construction which Montaigne would put, according to Cicero, upon this phrase, 'Aut bibat, aut abeat.'"—Coste.

[5] "If thou canst not live right, give place to those that can ; thou hast eaten, drunk, amused thyself to thy content; 'tis time to make departure, lest, being overdosed, the young ones first laugh at thee, and then turn thee out."—Horace, *Ep.*, ii. 2, 213.

in safety, but even to stupidity, insensibility, and nonentity?—

> "Democritum postquam matura vetustas
> Admonuit memorem, motus languescere mentis:
> Sponte sua letho caput obvius obtulit ipse."[1]

'Tis what Antisthenes said, "That a man must either make provision of sense to understand, or of a halter to hang himself"[2]; and what Chrysippus alleged upon this saying of the poet Tyrtæus, "Or to arrive at virtue or at death"[3]: and Crates said, "That love could be cured by hunger, if not by time; and if a man disliked these two remedies, by a rope."[4] That Sextius of whom both Seneca and Plutarch[5] speak with so high an encomium, having applied himself (all other things set aside) to the study of philosophy, resolved to throw himself into the sea, finding the progress of his studies too tedious and slow. He ran to find death, since he could not overtake knowledge. These are the words of the law upon this subject: "If, peradventure, some great inconvenience happen, for which there is no remedy, the haven is near, and a man may save himself by swimming out of his body, as out of a leaky skiff; for 'tis the fear of dying, and not the love of life, that ties the fool to his body."

As life renders itself by simplicity more pleasant, so, also, more innocent and better, as I was saying before. The simple and ignorant, says St. Paul, raise themselves up to heaven, and take possession of it; and we, with all our knowledge, plunge

[1] "So soon as, through age, Democritus found a manifest decadence in his mind, he himself went to meet death."—Lucretius, iii. 1052.
[2] *Contradictions of the Stoic Philosophers*, c. 14. [3] Idem, *ibid.*
[4] Diog. Laert., vi. 86.
[5] *On Amendment in Virtue.*

ourselves into the infernal abyss. I am neither swayed by Valentinian,[1] a professed enemy to all knowledge and literature; nor by Licinus, both Roman emperors, who called them the poison and pest of all politic government: nor by Mahomet, who, as I have heard, interdicted all manner of learning to his followers; but the example of the great Lycurgus and his authority, with the reverence of the divine Lacedæmonian policy, so great, so admirable, and so long flourishing in virtue and happiness without any institution or practice of letters, ought, certainly, to be of very great weight. Such as return from the new world discovered by the Spaniards in our fathers' days can testify to us how much more honestly and regularly those nations live, without magistrate and without laws, than ours do, where there are more officers and laws than there are other sorts of men, or than there are lawsuits:—

> "Di cittatorie piene, e de libelli,
> D'esamine, e di carte di procure,
> Hanno le mani et il seno, e gran fastelli
> Di chiose, di consigli, e di letture;
> Per cui le faculta de' poverelli
> Non sino mai nelle città sicure;
> Hanno dietro e dinanzi, e d'ambi i lati,
> Notai, procuratori, ed advocati."[2]

It was what a Roman senator said of the later ages, that their predecessors' breath stank of garlic, but

[1] Or rather Valens.

[2] Ariosto, xiv. 84.

> "Her lap was full of writs and of citations,
> Of process of actions and arrest,
> Of bills, of answers, and of replications,
> In Courts of Delegates and Requests,
> To grieve the simple with great vexations:
> She had resorting to her as her guests,
> Attending on her circuits and her journeys,
> Scriveners and clerks, and lawyers and attorneys."
> —Sir John Harington's paraphrase, 1591.

their stomachs were perfumed with a good conscience; and that on the contrary, those of his time were all sweet odour without, but stank within of all sorts of vices[1]; that is to say, as I interpret it, that they abounded with learning and eloquence, but were very defective in moral honesty. Incivility, ignorance, simplicity, roughness, are the natural companions of innocence; curiosity, subtlety, and knowledge bring malice in their train: humility, fear, obedience, and affability, which are the principal things that support and maintain human society, require an empty and docile soul, and little presuming upon itself. Christians have a special knowledge how natural and original an evil curiosity is in man: the thirst of knowledge, and the desire to become more wise, was the first ruin of human kind, and the way by which it precipitated itself into eternal damnation. Pride is his ruin and corruption: 'tis pride that diverts him from the common path, and makes him embrace novelties, and rather choose to be head of a troop, lost and wandering in the path of perdition, to be tutor and teacher of error and lies, than to be a disciple in the school of truth, suffering himself to be led and guided by the hand of another, in the right and beaten road. 'Tis, peradventure, the meaning of this old Greek saying: Ἡ δεισιδαιμονία χαθάπερ πατρι τῷ τύφῳ πείθεται.[2] O presumption, how much dost thou hinder us!

After that Socrates was told that the god of wisdom had attributed to him the title of sage, he was astonished at it,[3] and searching and examining himself throughout, could find no foundation for this divine decree: he knew others as just,

[1] Varro, cited by Nonius Marcellus, *in verbo* Cepe.

[2] "That superstition follows pride and obeys it as if it were a father."

[3] Plato, *Apology of Socrates.*

temperate, valiant, and learned as himself, and more eloquent, handsome, and more profitable to their country than he. At last, he concluded that he was not distinguished from others nor wise, but only because he did not think himself so, and that his god considered the self-opinion of knowledge and wisdom as a singular stupidity of man; and that his best doctrine was the doctrine of ignorance, and simplicity his best wisdom. The sacred word declares those miserable who have an opinion of themselves: "Dust and ashes," says it to such, "what hast thou wherein to glorify thyself?" And in another place, "God has made man like unto a shadow," of which who can judge, when by the removing of the light it shall be vanished? It is nothing but of us.

Our strength is so far from being able to comprehend the divine height, that of the works of the Creator those best bear His mark and are best His which we the least understand. To meet with an incredible thing, is an occasion with Christians to believe.[1] It is all the more reason that it is against human reason; if it were according to reason, it would no longer be a miracle; if it had an example, it would be no longer a singular thing:—

"Melius scitur Deus nesciendo,"[2]

says St. Augustine; and Tacitus:—

"Sanctius est ac reverentius de actis Deorum credere quam scire"[3];

and Plato thinks there is something of impiety in

[1] "Credo quia impossibile."—St. Augustin.

[2] "God is better known by not knowing."—Augustine, *De Ordine*, ii. 16.

[3] "It is more holy and reverend to believe the works of the gods than to know them."—Tacitus, *De Mor. Germ.*, c. 34.

inquiring too curiously into God, the world, and the first causes of things :—

"Atque illum quidem parentem hujus universitatis invenire, difficile; et quum jam inveneris, indicare in vulgus, nefas,"[1]

says Cicero. We pronounce, indeed, power, truth, justice, which are words that signify some great thing; but that thing we neither see nor conceive. We say that God fears, that God is angry, that God loves :—

"Immortalia mortali sermone notantes"[2]:

which are all agitations and emotions that cannot be in God, according to our form, nor can we imagine it, according to His. It only belongs to God to know Himself, and to interpret His own works; and He does it, in our language, to stoop and descend to us who grovel upon the earth. How can Prudence, which is the choice betwixt good and evil, be properly attributed to Him, whom no evil can touch? How the reason and intelligence, which we make use of, so as by obscure to arrive at apparent things, seeing that nothing is obscure to Him? and justice, which distributes to every one what appertains to Him, a thing created by the society and community of men: how is that in God? how temperance? how the moderation of corporal pleasures, that have no place in the divinity? Fortitude to support pain, labour, and dangers as little appertains to Him as the rest, these three things having no access to Him[3]:

[1] "To find out the parent of the world, is very hard: and when found out, to reveal him in common, is unlawful."—Cicero, translation from the *Timæus*.

[2] "Speaking of things immortal in mortal language."—Lucretius, v. 122.

[3] All this is taken from Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, iii. 15.

for which reason Aristotle holds Him[1] equally exempt from grace and anger:—

"Neque gratiâ neque irâ teneri potest; quod quæ talia essent, imbecilla essent omnia."[2]

The participation we have in the knowledge of truth, such as it is, is not acquired by our own force: God has sufficiently given us to understand that by the testimony He has chosen out of the common people, simple and ignorant men, whom He has been pleased to employ to instruct us in His admirable secrets. Our faith is not of our own acquiring; 'tis purely the gift of another's bounty; 'tis not by meditation or by virtue of our own understanding that we have acquired our religion, but by foreign authority and command; the weakness of our judgment more assists us than force, and our blindness more than our clearness of sight; 'tis rather by the mediation of our ignorance than of our knowledge that we know anything of the divine Wisdom. 'Tis no wonder if our natural and earthly means cannot conceive that supernatural and heavenly knowledge: let us bring nothing of our own, but obedience and subjection; for, as it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."[3]

Should I examine finally, whether it be in the

[1] *Nichom. Ethics*, vii. 1.

[2] "He can be affected neither with favour nor indignation, because both those are the effects of frailty."—Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*

[3] 1 *Corinthians*, i. 19, 20, 21.

power of man to find out that which he seeks, and if that quest wherein he has busied himself so many ages has enriched him with any new force or any solid truth: I believe he will confess, if he speaks from his conscience, that all he has got by so long an inquisition is only to have learned to know his own weakness. We have only by long study confirmed and verified the natural ignorance we were in before. The same has fallen out to men truly wise which befall ears of corn; they shoot and raise their heads high and pert, whilst empty; but when full and swollen with grain in maturity, begin to flag and droop; so, men having tried and sounded all things, and having found in that accumulation of knowledge and provision of so many various things, nothing massive and firm, nothing but vanity, have quitted their presumption and acknowledged their natural condition. 'Tis what Velleius reproaches Cotta with and Cicero, that what they had learned of Philo was that they had learned nothing.[1] Pherecydes, one of the seven sages, writing to Thales upon his deathbed: "I have," said he, "given order to my people, after my interment, to carry my writings to thee. If they please thee and the other sages, publish them; if not, suppress them. They contain no certainty with which I myself am satisfied. I pretend not to know the truth or to attain unto it; I rather open than discover things."[2] The wisest man that ever was,[3] being asked what he knew, made answer; he knew this, that he knew nothing. By which he verified what has been said, that the greatest part of what we know is the least of what we do not know, that is to say, that even what we

[1] Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, i. 17. [2] Diogenes Laertius, i. 22.
[3] Socrates.

think we know, is but a piece, and a very little one, of our ignorance. We know things in dreams, says Plato, and are ignorant of them in reality:—

"Omnes pene veteres, nihil cognosci, nihil percipi, nihil sciri posse dixerunt: angustos sensus, imbecilles animos, brevia curricula vitæ."[1]

And of Cicero himself, who stood indebted to his learning for all he was, Valerius says,[2] that in his old age he began to disrelish letters, and when most occupied with them, it was in independence of any party: following what he thought probable, now in one sect and then in another, evermore wavering under the doubts of the Academy:—

"Dicendum est, sed ita, ut nihil affirmem, quæram omnia, dubitans plerumque, et mihi diffidens."[3]

I should have too fine a game should I consider man in his common way of living and in gross: and yet I might do it by his own rule, who judges truth, not by the weight, but by the number of votes. Let us leave there the people:—

"Qui vigilans stertit,
Mortua cui vita est prope jam vivo atque videnti"[4];

who neither feel nor judge for themselves, and let most of their natural faculties lie idle. I will take man in his highest state. Let us consider him in that small number of men, excellent and culled out from the rest, who having been endowed with a

[1] "Almost all the ancients declare, that nothing is perceived, nothing can be ascertained: that the senses are narrow, men's minds weak, the course of life short."—Cicero, *Acad.*, i. 12.

[2] Valerius Maximus.

[3] "I am to speak, but so that I affirm nothing: I will inquire into all things, for the most part in doubt, and distrustful of myself."—Cicero, *De Divin.*, ii. 3.

[4] "Who waking snore; whose life is almost death, though living and seeing."—Lucretius, iii. 1061, 1059.

grand and special natural force, have, moreover, hardened and whetted it by care, study, and art, and raised it to the highest pitch of wisdom to which it can possibly arrive. They have adjusted their souls in all senses and all biases; have propped and supported them with all foreign helps proper for them, and enriched and adorned them with all they could borrow for their advantage, both within and without the world: these are they in whom is placed the supremest height to which human nature can attain. They have regulated the world with polities and laws; they have instructed it with arts and sciences, and further instructed it by the example of their admirable conduct. I shall make account of none but such men as these, their testimony and experience; let us examine how far they have proceeded, and on what they reposed their surest hold; the maladies and defects that we shall find amongst these men, the rest of the world may very boldly also declare to be their own.

Whoever goes in search of anything, must come to this, either to say that he has found it, or that it is not to be found, or that he is yet upon the quest. All philosophy is divided into these three kinds: her design is to seek out truth, knowledge, and certainty. The Peripatetics, Epicureans, Stoics, and others, have thought they had found it: these have established the sciences that we have, and have treated of them as of certainties. Clitomachus, Carneades, and the Academics, have despaired in their quest, and concluded that truth could not be conceived by our capacity; the result with these is all weakness and human ignorance; this sect has had the most and most noble followers. Pyrrho and other sceptics or epichists, whose dogmas were held by many of the ancients to have been taken

from Homer, the seven sages, Archilocus, Euripides, Zeno, Democritus, and Xenophanes, say, that they are yet upon the search of truth: these conclude that the others who think they have found it out are infinitely deceived; and that it is too daring a vanity in the second sort to determine that human reason is not able to attain unto it; for to establish the standard of our power, to know and judge the difficulty of things, is a great and extreme knowledge, of which they doubt whether man is capable:—

> "Nil sciri si quis putat, id quoque nescit,
> An sciri possit quo se nil scire fatetur."[1]

The ignorance that knows itself, judges, and condemns itself, is not an absolute ignorance: to be this, it must be ignorant of itself; so that the profession of the Pyrrhonians[2] is to waver, doubt, and inquire, not to make themselves sure of or responsible to themselves for anything. Of the three actions of the soul, the imaginative, the appetitive, and the consenting, they receive the two first; the last they hold ambiguous, without inclination or approbation, one way or the other, however slight. Zeno represented by motion his imagination of these divisions of the faculties of the soul; an open and expanded hand signified Appearance: a hand half shut and the fingers a little bent, Consent: a clutched fist, Comprehension: when with the left hand he yet pressed the fist closer, Knowledge.[3]

[1] "If any one says that nothing is known, he also does not know whether it is knowable that he knows nothing."—Lucretius, iv. 470.

[2] Agnosticism, which has of late regained a good deal of support, but is not properly understood, since the Doubting School says, not that it does not believe, but that it wants the material for forming an opinion. Such things may be so or so, but there is not sufficient evidence to prove them.

[3] Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 47.

Now this situation of their judgment, upright and inflexible, receiving all objects without application or consent, led them to their Ataraxy, which is a condition of life, peaceable, temperate, and exempt from the agitations we receive by the impression of the opinion and knowledge that we think we have of things; from which spring fear, avarice, envy, immoderate desires, ambition, pride, superstition, loss of novelty, rebellion, disobedience, obstinacy, and the greatest part of bodily ills; nay, by this they exempt themselves from the jealousy of their discipline: for they debate after a very gentle manner; they fear no rejoinder in their disputes: when they affirm that heavy things descend, they would be sorry to be believed, and love to be contradicted, to engender doubt and suspense of judgment, which is their end. They only put out their propositions to contend with those they think we have in our belief. If you take their arguments, they will as readily maintain the contrary; 'tis all one to them; they have no choice. If you maintain that snow is black, they will argue, on the contrary, that it is white; if you say it is neither the one nor the other, they will maintain that 'tis both. If you hold, as of certain judgment, that you know nothing of it, they will maintain that you do: yes, and if, by an affirmative axiom, you assure them that you doubt, they will argue against you that you doubt not, or that you cannot judge and determine that you doubt. And by this extremity of doubt, which jostles itself, they separate and divide themselves from many opinions, even of those that have several ways maintained doubt and ignorance. Why shall not they be allowed, say they, as well as the dogmatists, one to say green, another yellow; why may not they also doubt? Can anything be proposed

to us to grant or deny which it shall not be permitted to consider as ambiguous? And where others are carried away, either by the custom of their country or by the instruction of parents, or by accident, as by a tempest, without judging and without choice, nay, and for the most part before the age of discretion, to such or such an opinion, to the sect of the Stoics or Epicureans, to which they are enslaved and fast bound, as to a thing they cannot shake off:—

"Ad quamcumque disciplinam, velut tempestate, delati ad eam, tanquam ad saxum, adhærescunt"[1];

why shall not these likewise be permitted to maintain their liberty and to consider things without obligation or slavery?

"Hoc liberiores et solutiores, quod integra illis est judicandi potestas."[2]

Is it not of some advantage to be disengaged from the necessity that curbs others? is it not better to remain in suspense than to entangle one's self in the innumerable errors that human fancy has produced? is it not much better to suspend one's persuasion than to intermeddle with these wrangling and seditious divisions? What shall I choose? "What you please, provided you do choose."[3] A very foolish answer, but one, nevertheless, to which all the dogmatists seem to point; by which we are not permitted to be ignorant of that of which we are ignorant. Take the most eminent side, that of the greatest reputation; it will never be so sure,

[1] "To whatever discipline they are carried, as by a tempest, they cleave to it as to a rock."—Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 3.

[2] "In this more unconstrained and free, that they have the full power of judging."—Idem, *ibid.*, ii. 3.

[3] Idem, *ibid.*, ii. 43.

that to defend it you will not be forced to attack and contend with a hundred and a hundred adversaries; is it not better to keep out of this hurly-burly? You are permitted to embrace, with as much zeal as honour and life, Aristotle's opinion of the immortality of the soul, and to give the lie to Plato thereupon; and shall they be interdicted from doubting it? If it be lawful for Panætius to maintain his opinion about augury, dreams, oracles, vaticinations, of which things the Stoics make no doubt at all, why may not a wise man dare to do the same in all things which this man dared to do in those he had learned of his masters, and established by the common consent of the school whereof he is a professor and a member? If it be a child that judges, he knows not what it is: if a sage, he is prepossessed. They have reserved for themselves a marvellous advantage in battle, having eased themselves of the care of defence; if you strike them, 'tis no matter, provided they strike too; and they make everything serve their purpose; if they overcome, your argument is lame; if you, theirs: if they fail, they verify ignorance; if you fail, you do it: if they prove that nothing is known, it is well; if they cannot prove it, 'tis equally well:—

"Ut quum in eâdem re paria contrariis in partibus momenta inveniuntur, facilius ab utraque parte assertio sustineatur"[1]:

and they pretend to find out with much greater facility why a thing is false than why it is true; that which is not, than that which is; and what they do not believe, than what they do. Their way of speaking is, "I affirm nothing: it is no

[1] "So that, when equal reasons happen, *pro* and *con* in the same matter, the judgment may, on both sides, be more easily suspended."—Cicero, *Acad.*, i. 12.

more so than so, or than either one nor t'other: I understand it not. Appearances are everywhere equal: the law of speaking, *pro* or *con*, is the same: nothing seems true that may not seem false." Their sacramental word is ἐπέχω, that is to say, "I sustain, I do not budge." This is the burden of their song, and others of like substance. The effect of it is a pure, entire, perfect, and absolute suspension of the judgment: they make use of their reason to inquire and debate, but not to fix and determine. Whoever shall imagine a perpetual confession of ignorance, a judgment without bias or inclination, upon any occasion whatever, conceives a true idea of Pyrrhonism. I express this fancy as well as I can, by reason that many find it hard to conceive; and the authors themselves represent it somewhat variously and obscurely.

As to what concerns the actions of life, they are in this of the common fashion; they yield and lend themselves to the natural inclinations, to the power and impulse of passions, to the constitutions of laws and customs, and to the tradition of arts:—

"Non enim nos Deus ista scire, sed tantummodo uti, voluit."[1]

They suffer their ordinary actions to be guided by these things without any dispute or judgment; for which reason I cannot well reconcile with this argument what is said of Pyrrho; they represent him stupid and immovable, leading a kind of savage and unsociable life, getting in the way of the jostle of carts, going upon the edge of precipices, and refusing to accommodate himself to the laws. This is to exaggerate his discipline; he would never make himself a stock or a stone, he would show

[1] "For God chose not to have us know, but only use, those things."—Cicero, *De Divin.*, i. 78.

himself a living man, discoursing, reasoning, enjoying all natural conveniences and pleasures, employing and making use of all his corporal and spiritual faculties, in rule and reason; the fantastic, imaginary, and false privileges that man has usurped of lording it, of ordaining and establishing, he utterly renounced and quitted. There is no sect but is constrained to permit its sage to follow many things not comprehended, perceived, or consented to in its rules, if he means to live: and if he goes to sea he follows that design, not knowing whether it will be useful to him or no, and relies upon the tightness of the vessel, the experience of the pilot, the fitness of the season: probable circumstances only, according to which he is bound to go, and suffer himself to be governed by appearances, provided there be no express and manifest contrariety in them. He has a body, he has a soul; the senses push him, the mind spurs him on; and although he do not find in himself this proper and singular mark of judging, nor perceive that he ought not to engage his consent, considering that there may be some false, equal to these true appearances, yet does he not for all that fail of carrying on the offices of his life fully, freely, and conveniently. How many arts are there that profess to consist more in conjecture than in knowledge, that decide not upon true and false, and only follow that which seems true? There is, say they, true and false, and we have in us wherewith to seek it, but not to fix it when we touch it. We are much more prudent in letting ourselves be carried away by the swing of the world without inquisition; a soul clear from prejudice has a marvellous advance towards tranquillity and repose. Men who judge and control their judges never duly submit to them.

How much more docile and easy to be governed, both in the laws of religion and civil polity, are simple and incurious minds, than those over-vigilant and pedagoguish wits that will still be prating of divine and human causes? There is nothing in human invention that carries so great a show of likelihood and utility as this; this presents man, naked and empty, confessing his natural weakness, fit to receive some foreign force from above; unfurnished of human, and therefore more apt to receive divine knowledge; setting aside his own judgment to make more room for faith; not misbelieving, nor establishing any doctrine against the laws and common observances; humble, obedient, disciplinable, studious, a sworn enemy of heresy, and consequently freeing himself from vain and irreligious opinions introduced by false sects; 'tis a *carte blanche* prepared to receive from the finger of God such forms as He shall please to write upon it. The more we resign and commit ourselves to God, and the more we renounce ourselves, of the greater value are we. "Take in good part," says Ecclesiastes,[1] "the things that present themselves to thee, as they seem and taste from hand to mouth: the rest is out of thy knowledge":—

"Dominus novit cogitationes hominum, quoniam vanæ sunt."[2]

Thus we see that, of the three general sects of philosophy, two make open profession of doubt and ignorance; and in that of the Dogmatists, which is the third, it is easy to discover that the greatest part of them only assume a face of

[1] Chap. iii. 22.

[2] "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are but vanity."—*Psalm* xciv. 11.

assurance that they may have the better air; they have not so much thought to establish any certainty for us, as to show us how far they have proceeded in their search of truth:—

"Quam docti fingunt magis quam norunt." [1]

Timæus, having to instruct Socrates in what he knew of the gods, the world, and men, proposes to speak to him as a man to a man, and that it is sufficient if his reasons are as probable as those of another; for that exact reasons were neither in his nor in any other mortal hand. Which one of his followers has thus imitated:—

"Ut potero, explicabo; nec tamen ut Pythius Apollo, certa ut sint et fixa, quæ dixero; sed ut homunculus, probabilia conjecturâ sequens" [2];

and this upon the natural and common subject of the contempt of death: he has elsewhere translated from the very words of Plato:—

"Si forte, de deorum naturâ ortuque mundi disserentes, minus id, quod habemus in animo, consequimur, haud erit mirum; æquum est enim meminisse, et me, qui disseram, hominem esse, et vos, qui judicetis; ut, si probabilia dicentur, nihil ultra requiratis." [3]

Aristotle ordinarily heaps up a great number of other opinions and beliefs, to compare them with his own, and to let us see how much he has gone

[1] "Which the learned rather feign than know."

[2] "I will, as well as I am able, explain; yet not as Pythius Apollo, that what I say should be fixed and certain, but like an ordinary man that follows probabilities by conjecture."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, lib. i. 9.

[3] "If perchance, discoursing of the nature of gods and the world's original, we cannot do it quite as we desire, it will be no wonder. For it is just you should remember that both I who speak, and you who are to judge, are men; that if probable things are delivered, you may require no more."—Cicero, *ex Timæo*, c. 3.

beyond them, and how much nearer he approaches to probability: for truth is not to be judged by the authority and testimony of others: which made Epicurus religiously avoid quoting them in his writings. This is the prince of all dogmatists, and yet we are told by him that much knowledge administers to many occasion of doubting the more[1]; we see him sometimes purposely so shroud and muffle up himself in thick and inextricable obscurity, that we know not what use to make of his advice; it is, in fact, a Pyrrhonism under a resolutive form. Hear Cicero's protestation, who expounds to us another's fancy by his own:—

"Qui requirunt, quid de quâque re ipsi sentiamus, curiosius id faciunt, quam necesse est. Hæc in philosophiâ ratio contra omnia disserendi, nullamque rem aperte judicandi, profecta a Socrate, repetita ab Arcesilao, confirmata â Carneade, usque ad nostram viget ætatem. Hi sumus, qui omnibus veris falsa quædam adjuncta esse dicamus, tantâ similitudine, ut in iis nulla insit certe judicandi et assentiendi nota."[2]

Why has not Aristotle only, but most of the philosophers, affected difficulty, if not to emphasise the vanity of the subject and amuse the curiosity of our mind, by giving it this bare, hollow bone to pick? Clitomachus affirmed that he could never discover, by Carneades' writings, what opinion he was of.[3] This was what made

[1] "Qui plura novit, eum majora sequuntur dubia." This thought does not belong to Aristotle; it is attributed to Æneas Silvius, who became Pope as Pius II.—Naigeon.

[2] "They who desire to know what we think of everything, are more inquisitive than is necessary. This practice in philosophy, of disputing against everything, and of absolutely concluding nothing, begun by Socrates, repeated by Arcesilaus, and confirmed by Carneades, has continued in use even to our own time. We are those who declare that there is a mixture of things false amongst all that are true, with such a resemblance to one another, that there is in them no certain mark to direct us, either to judge or assent."—Cicero, *De Nat. Deorum*, i. 5.

[3] Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 45.

Epicurus affect to be abstruse, and that procured Heraclitus to be surnamed σκοτεινός.[1] Difficulty is a coin the learned make use of, like jugglers, to conceal the inanity of their art, and which human sottishness easily takes for current pay:—

> "Clarus, ob obscuram linguam, magis inter inanes . . .
> Omnia enim stolidi magis admirantur, amantque,
> Inversis quæ sub verbis latitantia cernunt."[2]

Cicero[3] reprehends some of his friends for giving more of their time to the study of astrology, law, logic, and geometry, than they were worth, saying that they were by these diverted from the duties of life, more profitable and more worthy studies; the Cyrenaic philosophers[4] equally despised natural philosophy and logic. Zeno, in the very beginning of the Books of the Commonwealth, declared all the liberal arts of no use.[5] Chrysippus said that what Plato and Aristotle had written concerning logic, they had only done in sport and by way of exercise, and could not believe that they spoke in earnest of so vain a thing; Plutarch says the same of metaphysics; and Epicurus would have said as much of rhetoric, grammar, poesy, mathematics, and, natural philosophy excepted, of all the sciences, and Socrates of them all, excepting that of manners and of life; whatever any one required to be instructed in by him, he would ever, in the first place, demand an account of the conditions of his present and past, which he

[1] Obscure.

[2] "He got a great name among the weak-witted, especially by reason of the obscurity of his language; for fools admire and love rather such things as are wrapped in dubious phrase."—Lucretius, i. 640.

[3] *De Offic.*, i. 6.

[4] Diogenes Laertius, ii. 92.

[5] Idem, *ibid.*, vii. 32.

examined and judged, esteeming all other learning subordinate and supernumerary to that :—

"Parum mihi placeant eæ literæ quæ ad virtutem doctoribus nihil profuerunt."[1]

Most of the arts have been, in like manner, decried by the same knowledge; but these men did not consider that it was from the purpose to exercise their wits in those very matters wherein there was no solid advantage.

As to the rest, some have looked upon Plato as a dogmatist, others as a doubter; others, in some things the one, and in other things the other. Socrates, the conductor of his dialogisms, is eternally upon questions and stirring up disputes, never determining, never satisfying; and professes to have no other science but that of opposing himself. Homer, their author, has equally laid the foundations of all the sects of philosophy, to show how indifferent it was which way we should choose. 'Tis said that ten several sects sprung from Plato; and, in my opinion, never did any instruction halt or waver, if his does not.

Socrates said that wise women,[2] in taking upon them the trade of helping others to bring forth, left the trade of bringing forth themselves; and that he by the title of a sage man, which the gods had conferred upon him, was disabled, in his virile and mental love, of the faculty of bringing forth: contenting himself to help and assist those who could, to open their nature, anoint the passes, facilitate the birth, judge of the infant, baptize it, nourish it, fortify it, swathe it, circumcise it:

[1] "That learning is in small repute with me, which nothing helped the teachers themselves to virtue."—Sallust, *De Bello Jug.*, c. 85.

[2] Midwives, called in French *Sages femmes.*

exercising and employing his understanding in the perils and fortunes of others.

It is so with the most part of this third sort of authors, as the ancients have observed in the writings of Anaxagoras, Democritus, Parmenides, Xenophanes, and others: they have a way of writing doubtful in substance and design, rather inquiring than teaching, though they mix their style with some dogmatical periods. Is not the same thing seen in Seneca and Plutarch? how many contradictions are there to be found in these, if a man pry narrowly into them? The reconcilers of the jurisconsults ought first to reconcile them, each for himself. Plato seems to have affected this method of philosophising in dialogues, to the end that he might with greater decency from several mouths deliver the diversity and variety of his own fancies. To treat variously of things is to treat of them as well as conformably, and better, that is to say, more copiously and with greater profit. Let us take example from ourselves: judicial judgments are the highest point of dogmatical and determinative speaking: and yet those which our parliaments present to the people, the most exemplary, and most proper to nourish in them the reverence due to that dignity, principally through the sufficiency of the persons exercising it, derive their beauty, not so much from the conclusion, which with them is of daily occurrence and common to every judge, as from the dispute and heat of diverse and contrary arguments, that questions of law permit. And the largest field for reprehension that some philosophers have against others is drawn from the diversities and contradictions wherewith every one of them finds himself perplexed; either on purpose,

to show the vacillation of human wit concerning everything; or ignorantly compelled by the volubility and incomprehensibility of all matter; which is the meaning of this phrase: in a slippery and sliding place let us suspend our belief: for, as Euripides says:—

"The works of God in various ways perplex us"[1]:

like that which Empedocles, as if shaken by a divine fury and compelled by truth, often strewed here and there in his writings. "No, no; we feel nothing, we see nothing; all things are concealed from us; there is not one thing of which we can positively say it is"[2]; according to the divine saying:—

"Cogitationes mortalium timidæ, et incertæ inventiones nostræ et providentiæ."[3]

It is not to be thought strange if men, despairing to overtake what they hunt after, have yet not lost the pleasure of the chase, study being of itself a pleasant employment, and so pleasant that amongst pleasures the Stoics forbid that also which proceeds from the exercise of the intellect, will have it curbed, and find a kind of intemperance in too much knowledge.

Democritus[4] having eaten figs at his table that tasted of honey, fell presently to consider within himself whence they should derive this unusual sweetness, and to be satisfied in it, was about to rise from the table to see the place whence the

[1] Plutarch, *On Miracles which have ceased.*

[2] Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 5. Sextus Empiricus, *Adver. Mathem.*

[3] "For the thoughts of mortal men are timid; and our devices are but uncertain."—*Book of Wisdom*, c. 9, ver. 14. Comp. Pascal, *De la Sagesse*, ix. 14.

[4] Plutarch, *Table Talk*, qu. 10, lib. i., where, however, Democritus is described as eating, not figs, but cucumbers.—Coste.

figs had been gathered; which his chamber-maid observing, and having understood the cause, she smilingly told him that he need not trouble himself about that, for she had put them into a vessel in which there had been honey. He was vexed that she had thus deprived him of the occasion of this inquisition, and robbed his curiosity of matter to work upon. "Go thy way," said he, "thou hast done me wrong; but for all that I will seek out the cause, as if it were natural"; and would willingly have found out some true reason for a false and imaginary effect. This story of a famous and great philosopher very clearly represents to us the studious passion, that puts us upon the pursuit of things of the acquisition of which we despair. Plutarch gives a like example of one who would not be satisfied in that whereof he was in doubt, that he might not lose the pleasure of inquiring into it; like the other, who would not that his physician should allay the thirst of his fever that he might not lose the pleasure of quenching it by drinking:—

"Satius est supervacua discere, quam nihil."[1]

As in all sorts of feeding, there is often only the mere pleasure of eating, and that what we take, which is acceptable to the palate, is not always nourishing or wholesome; so that which our understandings extract from learning does not cease to be pleasant, though there be nothing in it either nutritive or healthful. Thus say they: the consideration of nature is a diet proper for our minds; it raises and elevates us, makes us disdain low and terrestrial things, by comparing them with those that are celestial and high: even the inquisition of

[1] "'Tis better to learn more than is necessary than nothing at all." —Seneca, *Ep.*, 88.

great and occult things is very pleasant, even to those who acquire no other benefit than the reverence and fear of judging it. This is what they profess.[1] The vain image of this sickly curiosity is yet more manifest in this other example that they so often urge: Eudoxus[2] wished and begged of the gods that he might once see the sun near at hand, to comprehend its form, greatness, and beauty, though on the condition that he should thereby be immediately burned. He would, at the price of his life, purchase a knowledge of which the use and possession should at the same time be taken from him; and for this sudden and vanished knowledge, lose all the other knowledges he had in the present, or might afterwards acquire.

I do not easily persuade myself that Epicurus, Plato, and Pythagoras have given us their Atoms, Ideas, and Numbers as current money: they were too wise to establish their articles of faith upon a thing so uncertain and so disputable. But, in that obscurity and ignorance of the world, each of these great personages endeavoured to present some kind or other of image of light; and worked their brains for inventions that might, at all events, have a pleasant and subtle appearance, provided that, false as they were, they might make good their ground against those that would oppose them:—

"Unicuique ista pro ingenio finguntur, non ex scientiæ vi."[3]

One of the ancients, who was reproached that he professed philosophy, of which he nevertheless, in his own judgment, made no great account, answered that this was truly to philosophise.

[1] Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 41. [2] Diogenes Laertius, *in Vitâ*.
[3] "These things every one fancies according to his wit, and not by any power of knowledge."—Seneca, *Suasor.*, 4.

They would consider all, balance everything, and found this an employment well suited to our natural curiosity; some things they have written for the benefit of public society, as their religions, and, for that consideration, it was but reasonable that they should not examine public opinions too closely, that they might not disturb the common obedience to the laws and customs of their country.

Plato treats of this mystery with a raillery manifest enough; for where he writes as for himself, he gives no certain rule: when he plays the legislator, he borrows a magisterial and positive style, and boldly there foists in his most fantastic inventions as fit to persuade the vulgar as ridiculous to be believed by himself; knowing very well how fit we are to receive all sorts of impressions, especially the most immoderate and violent: and therefore in his laws he takes singular care that nothing be sung in public but poetry, of which the fabulous relations tend to some useful end; it being so easy to imprint all sorts of phantoms in the human mind, that it were injustice not to feed them rather with profitable untruths than with untruths that are unprofitable or hurtful. He says very plainly in his *Republic*,[1] "that it is very often necessary for the profit of men to deceive them." It is very easy to distinguish that some of the sects have more followed truth, and others utility, by which the last have gained their reputation. 'Tis the misery of our condition, that often that which presents itself to our imagination for the most true does not also appear the most useful to life; the boldest sects, as the Epicurean, Pyrrhonian, the new Academic, are yet, after all is said and done, constrained to submit to the civil law.

[1] Book v.

Other subjects there are that they have tumbled and tossed, some to the right and others to the left, every one endeavouring, right or wrong, to give them some kind of colour; for having found nothing so abstruse that they would not venture to touch it, they are often forced to forge weak and ridiculous conjectures, not that they themselves look upon them as any foundation, nor as establishing any certain truth, but merely for exercise:—

"Non tam id sensisse quod dicerent, quam exercere ingenia materiæ difficultate videntur voluisse."[1]

And if we did not take it thus, how should we palliate so great inconstancy, variety, and vanity of opinions as we see have been produced by those excellent and admirable souls? as, for example, what can be more vain than to imagine to dominate God by our analogies and conjectures? to regulate Him and the world by our capacities and our laws? and to make use, at the expense of the Divinity, of that small portion of knowledge He has been pleased to impart to our natural condition? and, because we cannot extend our sight to His glorious throne, to have brought Him down to our corruption and our miseries?

Of all human and ancient opinions concerning religion, that seems to me the most likely and most excusable that recognised in God an incomprehensible power, the original and preserver of all things, all goodness, all perfection, receiving and taking in good part the honour and reverence that man paid unto Him, under what method, name, or ceremonies soever:—

[1] "Not so much that they themselves believed what they said, as that they seem to have had a mind to exercise their wits in the difficulty of the matter."—*Auct. Incert.*

"Jupiter omnipotens, rerum, regumque deûmque
Progenitor genitrixque."[1]

This zeal has universally been looked upon from heaven with a gracious eye. All governments have reaped fruit from their devotion: impious men and actions have everywhere had suitable result. Pagan histories recognise dignity, order, justice, prodigies, and oracles, employed for their profit and instruction in their fabulous religions: God, peradventure, through His mercy, vouchsafing by these temporal benefits to cherish the tender principles of a kind of brutish knowledge that natural reason gave them of Him amid the deceiving images of their dreams. Not only deceiving and false, but impious also, and injurious, are those that man has forged from his own invention; and of all the religions that St. Paul found in repute at Athens, that which they had dedicated to The Unknown God seemed to him the most to be excused.[2]

Pythagoras shadowed the truth a little more closely, judging that the knowledge of this first Cause and Being of beings ought to be indefinite, without prescription, without declaration; that it was nothing else than the extreme effort of our imagination towards perfection, every one amplifying the idea according to his capacity. But if Numa attempted to conform the devotion of his people to this project, to attach them to a religion purely mental, without any prefixed object and material mixture, he undertook a thing of no use; the human mind could never support itself floating in such an infinity of inform thoughts; it requires

[1] "All-powerful Jove, father and mother of the world, of kings and gods."—Valerius Soranus, ap. St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei.*, vii. 9.
[2] *Acts*, xvii. 23.

some certain image thereof to be presented according to its own model. The Divine Majesty has thus, in some sort, suffered Himself to be circumscribed in corporal limits for our advantage: His supernatural and celestial sacraments have signs of our earthly condition: His adoration is by sensible offices and words, for 'tis man that believes and prays. I omit the other arguments upon this subject; but a man would have much ado to make me believe that the sight of our crucifixes, that the picture of our Saviour's piteous passion, that the ornaments and ceremonious motions of our churches, that the voices accommodated to the devotion of our thoughts, and that emotion of the senses, do not warm the souls of the people with a religious passion of very advantageous effect.

Of those,[1] to whom they have given a body, as necessity required in that universal blindness, I should, I fancy, most incline to those who adored the sun:—

"La lumière commune,
L'œil du monde; et si Dieu au chef porte des yeulx,
Les rayons du soleil sont ses yeulx radieux,
Qui donnent vie a touts, nous maintiennent et gardent,
Et les faicts des humains en ce monde regardent:
Ce beau, ce grand soleil, qui nous faict les saisons,
Selon qu'il entre ou sort de ses douze maisons;
Qui remplit l'univers de ses vertus cogneuës;
Qui d'un traict de ses yeulx nous dissipe le nuës:
L'esprit, l'ame du monde, ardent et flamboyant,
En la course d'un jour tout le ciel tournoyant;
Plein d'immense grandeur, rond, vagabond, et ferme;
Lequel tient dessoubs luy tout le monde pour terme:
En repos, sans repos; oysif, et sans sejour;
Fils aisnè de nature, et le père du jour"[2]:

[1] *i.e.* Divinities.

[2] This is a very advanced estimate in modern Western philosophy of the immense worth of the sun in the cosmic system. But, as we perceive from a previous passage, the ancient Greeks had imbibed

forasmuch as besides this grandeur and beauty of his, 'tis the piece of this machine that we discover at the remotest distance from us, and, by that means, so little known that they were pardonable for entering into so great admiration and reverence of it.

Thales,[1] who first inquired into this matter, believed God to be a spirit, that made all things of water: Anaximander, that the gods were always dying and re-entering into life at divers seasons, and that there were an infinite number of worlds: Anaximenes that the air was God, that he was produced and immense, ever moving. Anaxagoras was the first who held that the description and system of all things were conducted by the power and reason of an infinite spirit. Alcmæon gave divinity to the sun, moon, and stars, and to the soul. Pythagoras made God a spirit diffused through the nature of all things, from which our souls are extracted: Parmenides, a circle surrounding the heaven and supporting the world by the heat of light. Empedocles pronounced the four

from the East a great reverence for this capital luminary. Thus translated from Ronsard by Cotton:—

> "The common light that shines indifferently
> On all alike, the world's enlightening eyes,
> And if the Almighty ruler of the skies
> Has eyes, the sunbeams are His radiant eyes,
> That life to all impart, maintain, and guard,
> And all men's actions upon earth regard.
> This great, this beautiful, and glorious sun,
> That seasons gives by revolution:
> That with his influence fills the universe,
> And with one glance does sullen shades disperse.
> Life, soul of the world, that flaming in his sphere,
> Surrounds the heavens in one day's career,
> Immensely great, moving, yet firm and round,
> Who the whole world below has fixed his bound,
> At rest without rest, idle without stay,
> Nature's first son, and father of the day."

[1] Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, i. 10, &c.

elements, of which all things are composed, to be gods: Protagoras had nothing to say, whether they were or not, or what they were: Democritus was one while of opinion that the images of objects and their orbs were gods; another while, the nature that darts out those images, and again, our science and intelligence. Plato divides his belief into several opinions: he says in his *Timæus*, that the father of the world cannot be named; in his *Laws*, that men are not to inquire into his being; and elsewhere, in the same books, he makes the world, the heavens, the stars, the earth, and our souls, gods; admitting, moreover, those which have been received by ancient institution in every republic. Xenophon reports a like perplexity in Socrates' doctrine; one while, that men are not to inquire into the form of God, and presently makes him maintain that the sun is God, and the soul, God; first, that there is but one God, and afterwards that there are many. Speusippus, the nephew of Plato, makes God a certain power governing all things, and that it is animal. Aristotle, one while says it is the mind, and another while the world; now he gives this world another master, and again makes God the heat of heaven. Xenocrates makes eight; five named amongst the planets, the sixth composed of all the fixed stars, as of so many members; the seventh and the eighth, the sun and the moon. Heraclides Ponticus does nothing but float in his opinions, and finally deprives God of sense and makes him shift from one form to another: and at last says, that 'tis heaven and earth. Theophrastus wanders in the same irresolution amongst his various fancies, attributing the superintendence of the world one while to the understanding, another while to heaven, and then

to the stars: Strato says 'tis nature having the power of generation, augmentation and diminution, without form and sentiment: Zeno says 'tis the law of nature commanding good and prohibiting evil, which law is animal; and abolishes the accustomed gods, Jupiter, Juno, and Vesta: Diogenes Apolloniates says 'tis air. Xenophanes makes God round, seeing and hearing, not breathing, and having nothing in common with human nature. Aristo thinks the form of God to be incomprehensible, deprives Him of sense, and knows not whether He be animal or something else: Cleanthes one while supposes Him to be reason, another while the world, then the soul of nature, and then the supreme heat surrounding and enveloping all things. Perseus, Zeno's disciple, was of opinion that men have given the title of gods to such as have added any notable advantage to human life, and even to profitable things themselves. Chrysippus made a confused heap of all the preceding lucubrations, and reckons, amongst a thousand forms of gods that he makes, the men also that have been deified. Diagoras and Theodorus flatly denied that there were any gods at all. Epicurus makes the gods shining, transparent, and perflable,[1] lodged, as betwixt two forts, betwixt two worlds, secure from blows; clothed in a human figure and with such members as we have, which members are to them of no use:—

"Ego deûm genus esse semper dixi et dicam cœlitum;
Sed eos non curare opinor, quid agat humanum genus."[2]

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[1] That can be blown through.

[2] "I have ever thought, and still think, there are gods above, but I do not conceive that they care what men do."—Ennius, ap. Cicero, *ubi suprâ*.

Trust to your philosophy, my masters, and brag that you have found the bean in the cake, with all this rattle from so many philosophical heads! The perplexity of so many worldly forms has gained this for me, that manners and opinions contrary to mine do not so much displease as instruct me; nor so much make me proud, as they humble me in comparing them; and all other choice than what comes from the express and immediate hand of God, seems to me a choice of very little prerogative. The polities of the world are no less opposed upon this subject than the schools: by which we may understand that fortune itself is not more variable and diverse, nor more blind and inconsiderate, than our reason. The things that are most unknown are the most proper to be deified; wherefore, to make gods of ourselves, as the ancients did, exceeds the extremest weakness of understanding. I should much rather have gone along with those who adored the serpent, the dog, or the ox; forasmuch as their nature and their being are less known to us, and that we are more at liberty to imagine what we please of those beasts, and to attribute to them extraordinary faculties; but to have made gods of our own condition, of which we should know the imperfection, and to have attributed to them desire, anger, revenge, marriages, generation, alliances, love and jealousy, our members and bones, our fevers and pleasures, our deaths and obsequies, this must needs proceed from a marvellous intoxication of human understanding:—

> "Quæ procul usque adeo divino ab numine distant,
> Inque deum numero quæ sint indigna videri."[1]

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[1] "Which things are so remote from the divine nature, that they are unworthy to be ranked among the gods."—Lucretius, v. 123.

"Formæ, ætates, vestitus, ornatus noti sunt: genera, conjugia, cognationes, omniaque traducta ad similitudinem imbecillitatis humanæ: nam et perturbatis animis inducuntur; accipimus enim deorum cupiditates, ægritudines, iracundias"[1];

as having attributed divinity not only to faith, virtue, honour, concord, liberty, victory, piety, but also to voluptuousness, fraud, death, envy, old age, misery: to fear, fever, ill fortune, and other injuries of our frail and transitory life:—

"Quid juvat hoc, templis nostros inducere mores?
O curvæ in terris animæ, et cœlestium inanes!"[2]

The Egyptians with a bold foresight interdicted, upon pain of hanging, that any one should say that their gods Serapis and Isis had formerly been men, and yet no one was ignorant that they had been such; and their effigies, represented with the finger upon the mouth, signified, says Varro,[3] this mysterious decree to their priests, to conceal their mortal original, as it must, by necessary consequence, annul all the veneration paid to them. Seeing that man so much desired to equal himself to God, he had done better, says Cicero,[4] to have attracted the divine conditions to himself, and have drawn them down hither below, than to send his corruption and misery up on high: but, in truth, he has in several ways done both the one and the other, with like vanity of opinion.

When the philosophers search narrowly into the

[1] "Their forms, ages, clothes, ornaments are known: their descents, marriages, kindred, and all appropriated to the similitude of human weakness; for they are represented to us with anxious minds, and we read of the lusts, sickness, and anger of the gods."—Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, ii. 28.

[2] "Into our temples to what end introduce our own corrupt manners? O souls, bending to the earth, devoid of all heavenly sentiments!"—Persius, ii. 61, 62.

[3] Cited by St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, xviii. 5.

[4] *Tusc. Quæs.*, i. 26.

hierarchy of their gods, and make a great bustle about distinguishing their alliances, offices, and power, I cannot believe they speak with any seriousness. When Plato describes Pluto's verge to us, and the bodily pleasures or pains that await us after the ruin and annihilation of our bodies, and accommodates them to the notions we have of them in this life :—

> "Secreti celant calles, et myrtea circum
> Sylva tegit; curæ non ipsâ in morte relinquunt"[1];

when Mohammed promises his followers a paradise hung with tapestry, adorned with gold and precious stones, furnished with wenches of excelling beauty, rare wines and delicate dishes, I easily discern that these are mockers who accommodate their promises to our stupidity, to attract and allure us by hopes and opinions suitable to our mortal appetite. And yet some amongst us are fallen into the like error, promising to themselves, after the resurrection, a terrestrial and temporal life, accompanied with all sorts of worldly conveniences and pleasures. Can we believe that Plato, he who had such heavenly conceptions, and was so conversant with Divinity as thence to derive the name of the Divine Plato, ever thought that the poor creature, man, had anything in him applicable to that incomprehensible power? and that he believed that the weak holds we are able to take were capable, or the force of our understanding robust enough to participate of eternal beatitude or pain? We should then tell him, on behalf of human reason : if the pleasures thou dost promise us in the other life are of the same kind that I have enjoyed here below, that

[1] "Secret paths hide them, and myrtle groves environ them; their cares do not leave them when they die."—*Æneid*, vi. 443.

has nothing in common with infinity: though all my five natural senses should be loaded with pleasure and my soul full of all the contentment it could hope or desire, we know what all this amounts to; all this would be nothing: if there be anything of mine there, there is nothing divine; if it be no more than what may belong to our present condition, it cannot be reckoned: all contentment of mortals is mortal: the recognition of our parents, children, and friends, if that can touch and delight us in the other world, if there it still continue a satisfaction to us, we still remain in earthly and finite conveniences: we cannot, as we ought, conceive the grandeur of those high and divine promises, if we can in any sort conceive them: to have a worthy imagination of them we must imagine them unimaginable, inexplicable, and incomprehensible, and absolutely another thing than any in our miserable experience. "Eye hath not seen," says St. Paul, "nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."[1] And if to render us capable of them our being be reformed and changed (as thou, Plato, sayest by thy purifications), it must be so extreme and total a change that, by physical doctrine, it will be no more us:—

> "Hector erat tunc cum bello certabat; at ille
> Tractus ab Æmonio, non erat Hector, equo"[2]:

it must be something else that must receive these recompenses:—

> "Quod mutatur . . . dissolvitur; interit ergo;
> Trajiciuntur enim partes, atque ordine migrant."[3]

[1] 1 *Corinthians*, ii. 9, after *Isaiah*, lxiv. 4.

[2] "He was Hector whilst he was fighting; but when dragged by Achilles' steeds, he was no longer Hector."—Ovid, *Trist.*, iii. 11, 27.

[3] "What is changed is dissolved, and therefore perishes; for the parts are separated, and depart from their order."—Lucretius, iii. 756.

For, in Pythagoras' metempsychosis, and the change of habitation that he imagined in souls, can we believe that the lion in whom the soul of Cæsar is enclosed espouses Cæsar's passions, or that the lion is he? If it were still Cæsar, they would be in the right who, controverting this opinion with Plato, reproach him that the son might be seen to ride his mother transformed into a mule, and the like absurdities. And can we believe that in the mutations that are made of the bodies of animals into others of the same kind, the new-comers are not other than their predecessors? From the ashes of a phœnix a worm, they say,[1] is engendered, and from that another phœnix; who can imagine that this second phœnix is not other than the first? We see our silkworms as it were die and wither; and from this withered body a butterfly is produced, and from that another worm; how ridiculous would it be to imagine that this were still the first! that which has once ceased to be is no more:—

> "Nec, si materiam nostram collegerit ætas
> Post obitum, rursumque redegerit, ut sita nunc est,
> Atque iterum nobis fuerint data lumina vitæ,
> Pertineat, quidquam tamen ad nos id quoque factum;
> Interrupta semel cum sit repetentia nostra."[2]

And, Plato, when thou sayest, in another place, that it shall be the spiritual part of man that will be concerned in the fruition of the recompenses of another life, thou tellest us a thing wherein there is as little appearance of truth:—

[1] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, x. 2.

[2] "Nor, though time should collect after death our material atoms, and restore them to the form they had before, and give us again new light of life, would that new figure concern us at all; the sense of our being, once interrupted, is gone."—Lucretius, iii. 859.

> "Scilicet, avolsis radicibus, ut nequit ullam
> Dispicere ipse oculus rem, seorsum corpore toto[1];

for, by this account, it would no more be man, nor consequently us, who should be concerned in this enjoyment: for we are composed of two principally essential parts, the separation of which is the death and ruin of our being:—

> "Inter enim jecta est vitai pausa, vageque
> Deerrarunt passim motus ab sensibus omnes"[2]:

we cannot say that the man suffers when the worms feed upon his members and that the earth consumes them:—

> "Nil tamen est ad nos, qui comptu conjugioque
> Corporis atque animæ consistimus uniter apti."[3]

Moreover, upon what foundation of their justice can the gods take notice of or reward man after his death, for his good and virtuous actions, since it was they themselves who put them in the way and mind to do them? And why should they be offended at and punish him for evil actions, since they themselves have created him in so frail a condition, and that, with one glance of their will, they might prevent him from evil doing? Might not Epicurus, with great colour of human reason, object this to Plato, did he not often save himself with this sentence: "That it is impossible to establish anything certain of the immortal nature by the mortal"? She does nothing but err throughout, but especially when she meddles with divine

[1] "No more than eyes once torn from their sockets can ever after see anything."—Lucretius, iii. 562.

[2] "For, when life is extinct, all motions of sense are dispersed and banished."—Idem, *ibid.*, 1872.

[3] "That is nothing to us whose being solely consists in the strict union of body and soul."—Idem, *ibid.*, 857.

things. Who more evidently perceives this than we? For although we have given her certain and infallible principles, and though we have enlightened her steps with the sacred lamp of the truth that it has pleased God to communicate to us, we daily see, nevertheless, that if she swerve never so little from the ordinary path, and that she stray from or wander out of the way set out and beaten by the Church, how immediately she loses, confounds, and fetters herself, tumbling and floating in this vast, turbulent, and waving sea of human opinions, without restraint and without any determinate end: so soon as she loses that great and common road she enters into a labyrinth of a thousand several paths.

Man cannot be anything but what he is, nor imagine beyond the reach of his capacity. "'Tis a greater presumption," says Plutarch,[1] "in them who are but men to attempt to speak and discourse of the gods and demi-gods, than it is in a man, utterly ignorant of music, to judge of singing; or in a man who never saw a camp to dispute about arms and martial affairs, presuming, by some light conjecture, to understand the effect of an art to which he is totally a stranger." Antiquity, I fancy, thought to put a compliment upon and to add something to the divine grandeur in assimilating it to man, investing it with his faculties and adorning it with his fine humours and most shameful necessities: offering to it our aliments to eat, our dances, mummeries, and farces to divert it, our vestments to cover it, and our houses to inhabit; caressing it with the odours of incense and the sounds of music, with festoons and nosegays; and, to accommodate it to our vicious passions, flattering its justice with

[1] *Why Divine Justice sometimes defers Punishment.*

inhuman vengeance, delighting it with the ruin and dissipating of things by it created and preserved: as Tiberius Sempronius, who burned the rich spoils and arms he had gained from the enemy in Sardinia as a sacrifice to Vulcan, and Paulus Æmilius those of Macedonia to Mars and Minerva. And Alexander, arriving at the Indian Ocean, threw several great vessels of gold into the sea in favour of Thetis, and, moreover, loaded her altars with a slaughter, not of innocent beasts only, but of men also; as several nations, and ours amongst the rest, ordinarily used to do; and I believe there is no nation that has not done the same:—

> "Sulmone creatos
> Quatuor hic juvenes, totidem, quos educat Ufens,
> Viventes rapit, inferias quos immolet umbris."[1]

The Getæ hold themselves to be immortal, and that death is nothing but a journey to Zamolxis their god. Once in every five years they despatch some one amongst them to him, to entreat of him such necessaries as they require. This envoy is chosen by lot, and the form of his dispatch, after having been instructed by word of mouth what he is to say, is, that of those present three hold out so many javelins, against which the rest throw his body with all their force. If he happen to be wounded in a mortal part and that he immediately die, 'tis reputed a certain sign of divine favour; if he escape, he is looked upon as a wicked and execrable wretch, and another is deputed after the same manner in his stead. Amestris, the wife of Xerxes,[2] having grown old, caused at once fourteen young men of the best

[1] "Four sons of Sulmo, and as many more whom Ufens bred, he seized alive, to offer them a sacrifice to the infernal gods."—*Æneid*, x. 517.

[2] Herodotus, vii.

families of Persia to be buried alive, according to the religion of the country, to gratify some infernal deity. And to this day the idols of Themixtitan are cemented with the blood of little children, and they delight in no sacrifice but of these pure and infantine souls: a justice thirsty of innocent blood!—

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum."[1]

The Carthaginians immolated their own children to Saturn; and such as had none of their own bought of others,[2] the father and mother being further obliged to attend the ceremony with a gay and contented countenance.

It was a strange fancy to seek to gratify the divine goodness with our affliction. Like the Lacedæmonians, who courted their Diana with the tormenting of young boys, whom they caused to be whipped for her sake, very often to death[3]: it was a savage humour to think to gratify the Architect by the subversion of His building, and to think to take away the punishment due to the guilty by punishing the innocent; and that poor Iphigenia, at the port of Aulis, should by her death and sacrifice acquit towards God the whole army of the Greeks from all the crimes they had committed:—

"Sed casta inceste, nubendi tempore in ipso,
Hostia concideret mactatu mœsta parentis"[4];

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[1] "Religion could persuade men to so many mischiefs."—Lucretius, i. 102.

[2] Plutarch, *On Superstition.*

[3] Idem, *Notable Sayings of the Lacedæmonians.* But it was young girls who were thus treated, according to Mr. St. John.

[4] "But that the chaste girl, on the very eve of her nuptials, should die, a sad victim, immolated by her father."—Lucretius, i. 92.

and that those two noble and generous souls of the two Decii, father and son, to incline the favour of the gods to be propitious to the affairs of Rome, should throw themselves headlong into the thickest of the enemy :—

"Quæ fuit tanta deorum iniquitas, ut placari populo Romano non possent, nisi tales viri occidissent?"[1]

To which may be added, that it is not for the criminal to cause himself to be scourged according to his own measure nor at his own time; but that it wholly belongs to the judge, who considers nothing as chastisement but the pain he appoints, and cannot deem that punishment which proceeds from the consent of him who suffers: the divine vengeance presupposes an absolute dissent in us, both for its justice and our own penalty. And therefore it was a ridiculous humour of Polycrates the tyrant of Samos,[2] who, to interrupt the continued course of his good fortune and to balance it, went and threw the dearest and most precious jewel he had into the sea, fancying that by this voluntary mishap he bribed and satisfied the revolution and vicissitude of fortune; and she, to mock his folly, ordered it so that the same jewel came again into his hands, found in the belly of a fish. And then to what end are those tearings and mutilations of the Corybantes, the Menades, and in our times of the Mohammedans, who slash their faces, bosoms, and members to gratify their prophet: seeing that the offence lies in the will, not in the breasts, eyes, genitories, in plumpness, in the shoulders, or the throat?—

[1] "How great an injustice in the gods was it that they could not be reconciled to the people of Rome unless such men perished!"—Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, iii. 6.

[2] Herodotus, iii. 41.

"Tantus est perturbatæ mentis, et sedibus suis pulsæ furor, ut sic dii placentur, quemadmodum ne homines quidem sæviunt."[1]

The use of this natural contexture has not only respect to us, but also to the service of God and of other men; and 'tis as unjust wilfully to wound or hurt it, as to kill ourselves upon any pretence whatever; it seems to be great cowardice and treason to exercise cruelty upon and to destroy the functions of the body, stupid and servile, in order to spare the soul the trouble of governing them according to reason:—

"Ubi iratos deos timent, qui sic propitios habere merentur? . . . In regiæ libidinis voluptatem castrati sunt quidam; sed nemo sibi, ne vir esset, jubente, domino, manus intulit."[2]

So did they fill their religion with many ill effects:—

"Sæpiuso lim
Religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta."[3]

Now nothing about us can, in any sort, be compared or likened unto the divine nature that will not blemish and tarnish it with so much imperfection. How can that infinite beauty, power, and goodness admit of any correspondence or similitude to so abject a thing as we are, without extreme wrong and dishonour to His divine greatness?—

"Infirmum Dei fortius est hominibus: et stultum Dei sapientius est hominibus."[4]

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[1] "So great is the fury of the mind perturbed, and dislodged from its seat, that the gods may be appeased, whereat even men do not shew anger."—St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, vi. 10.

[2] "Where they fear the angry gods, who are thus propitiated? Some, indeed, have been made eunuchs for the lust of princes: but no man at his master's command has put his own hand to unman himself."—St. Augustin, *ubi suprâ*, after Seneca.

[3] "Formerly religion often inspired wicked and impious deeds."—Lucretius, i. 77.

[4] "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."—1 *Cor.*, i. 25.

Stilpo the philosopher being asked whether the gods were delighted with our adorations and sacrifices: "You are indiscreet," answered he; "let us withdraw apart if you talk of such things."[1] Nevertheless, we prescribe Him bounds, we keep His power besieged by our reasons (I call reason our reveries and dreams with the dispensation of philosophy, which says, that the wicked man, and even the fool, go mad by reason, but 'tis by a particular form of reason); we will subject Him to the vain and feeble appearances of our understanding; Him who has made both us and our understanding. Because nothing is made of nothing, God, therefore, could not have made the world without matter. What! has God put into our hands the keys and most secret springs of His power; is He obliged not to exceed the limits of our knowledge? Put the case, O man, that thou hast been able here to mark some footsteps of His effects: dost thou, therefore, think that he has therein employed all He can, and has crowded all His forms and all His ideas in this work? Thou seest nothing but the order and regulation of this little vault wherein thou art lodged—if thou dost see so much—whereas His divinity has an infinite jurisdiction beyond; this part is nothing in comparison of the whole:—

> "Omnia cum cœlo, terrâque, marique,
> Nil sunt ad summam summaï totius omnem"[2]:

'tis a municipal law that thou allegest; thou knowest not what is the universal. Tie thyself to that to which thou art subject, but not Him; He

[1] Diogenes Laertius, ii. 117.

[2] "Since all things in heaven, earth, and sea are as nothing to the totality of the great All."—Lucretius, v. 679.

is not of thy brotherhood, thy fellow-citizen, or companion. If He has in some sort communicated Himself unto thee, 'tis not to debase Himself to thy littleness, nor to make thee controller of His power; the human body cannot fly to the clouds. 'Tis for thee the sun runs without resting every day his ordinary course: the bounds of the seas and the earth cannot be confounded: the water is unstable and without firmness; a wall, unless it be broken, is impenetrable to a solid body; a man cannot preserve his life in the flames; he cannot be both in heaven and upon earth, and corporally in a thousand places at once. 'Tis for thee that He has made these rules; 'tis thee that they concern; He manifested to the Christians that he enfranchised them all, when it pleased Him. And, in truth, why, almighty as He is, should He have limited His power within any certain bounds? In favour of whom should He have renounced His privilege? Thy reason has in no other thing more of likelihood and foundation, than in that wherein it persuades thee that there is a plurality of worlds:—

"Terramque, et solem, lunam, mare, cætera quæ sunt,
Non esse unica, sed numero magis innumerali"[1]:

the most eminent minds of elder times believed it, and some of this age of ours, compelled by the appearances of human reason, do the same; forasmuch as in this fabric that we behold there is nothing single and one:—

"Quum in summâ res nulla sit una,
Unica quæ gignatur, et unica solaque crescat,"[2]

[1] "And the earth, and sun, moon, sea, and the rest that are, are not single, but rather innumerable."—Lucretius, ii. 1085.

[2] "Since there is nothing single in this mighty mass, that can alone beget, or alone increase."—*Ibid.*, 1077.

and that all the kinds are multiplied in some number or other; by which it seems not to be likely that God should have made this work only without a companion, and that the matter of this form should have been totally exhausted in this sole individual:—

> "Quare etiam atque etiam tales fateare necesse est,
> Esse alios alibi congressus materiai,
> Qualis hic est, avido complexu quem tenet æther"[1]:

especially if it be a living creature, which its motions render so credible that Plato affirms it,[2] and that many of our people either confirm it or do not venture to deny it: no more than that ancient opinion, that the heaven, the stars, and other members of the world, are creatures composed of body and soul, mortal in respect of their composition, but immortal by the determination of the Creator. Now, if there be many worlds, as Democritus, Epicurus, and almost all philosophy has believed, how do we know that the principles and rules of this of ours in like manner concern the rest? They may, peradventure, have another form and another polity. Epicurus[3] supposes them either like or unlike. We see in this world an infinite difference and variety, merely by distance of places; neither corn nor wine, nor any of our animals, are to be seen in that new corner of the world discovered by our fathers; 'tis all there another thing; and, in times past, do but consider in how many parts of the world they had no knowledge either of Bacchus or Ceres. If Pliny and Herodotus are to be believed, there are, in certain

[1] "Wherefore it is again and again necessary to confess that there must elsewhere be other aggregations of matter, just as that which the air holds in strict grasp."—Lucretius, ii. 1064.

[2] In the *Timæus*.

[3] Diogenes Laertius, x. 85.

places, kinds of men very little resembling us; and there are mongrel and ambiguous forms betwixt the human and brutal natures: there are countries where men are born without heads, having their mouth and eyes in their breast[1]; where they are all hermaphrodites; where they go on all fours; where they have but one eye in the forehead, and a head more like that of a dog than like one of ours.[2] Where they are half fish the lower part, and live in the water; where the women bear at five years old, and live but eight; where the head and skin of the forehead are so hard, that a sword will not enter it, but rebounds; where men have no beards; nations that know not the use of fire; and others that eject their seed of a black colour.[3] What shall we say of those that naturally change themselves into wolves, colts, and then into men again?[4] And if it be true, as Plutarch says,[5] that in some place of the Indies, there are men without mouths, who nourish themselves with the smell of certain odours, how many of our descriptions are false? Man, at this rate, becomes more than ludicrous, and, peradventure, quite incapable of reason and society; the disposition and cause of our internal structure would, for the most part, be to no purpose.

Moreover, how many things are there in our own knowledge that oppose those fine rules we have cut out for and prescribed to Nature? And yet we must undertake to circumscribe God Himself! How many things do we call miraculous and contrary to Nature? this is done by every

[1] Herodotus, iv. 4.
[2] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, viii.
[3] Herodotus, iii.
[4] Pliny (viii.) merely mentions these stories as false. They forestalled Mandevile and Munchausen.
[5] "On the Face of the Moon."—Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, vii.

nation and by every man, according to the measure of their ignorance; how many occult properties and quintessences do we discover? For, with us, to go "according to Nature," is no more but to go "according to our intelligence," as far as that is able to follow, and as far as we are able to see into it: all beyond that must be monstrous and irregular. Now, by this account, all things shall be monstrous to the wisest and most understanding men; for human reason has persuaded them that it has no manner of ground or foundation, not so much as to be assured that snow is white; and Anaxagoras affirmed it to be black[1]; if there be anything, or if there be nothing: if there be knowledge or ignorance, which Metrodorus of Chios denied that man was able to determine[2]; or whether we live, as Euripides doubts, "whether the life we live is life, or whether that we call death be not life":—

> "Τίς δ' οἶδεν εἰ ζην τὸνθ, ὃ κεκληται θανεῖν,
> Τὸ ζῆν δὲ θνήσκειν ἔστι"[3]

and not without some appearance: for why do we, from this instant which is but a flash in the infinite course of an eternal night, and so short an interruption of our perpetual and natural condition, death possessing all that passed before and all the future of this moment, and also a good part of the moment itself, derive the title of Being? Others swear there is no motion at all,[4] as the followers of Melissus, and that nothing stirs; for if there be nothing but One, neither can that spherical motion be of any use to him, nor the motion from one

[1] Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 23 and 31; *Ep. ad Quint. Frat.*, ii. 13.
[2] Idem, *Acad.*, ib.; *Sextus Empiricus*, p. 146.
[3] See Plato, *Gorgias*, p. 300; Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pyrrho*; Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrh. Hyp.*, iii. 24.
[4] Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Melissus*.

place to another, as Plato proves; others say there's neither generation nor corruption in Nature. Protagoras[1] says that there is nothing in Nature but doubt, that a man may equally dispute of all things. Nausiphanes, that of things which seem to be, nothing is more than it is not: that there is nothing certain but uncertainty[2]: Parmenides, that of that which it seems there is no one thing in general; that there is but One[3]; Zeno,[4] that there's no One, and that there is nothing: if there were One, it would either be in another or in itself; if it be in another, they are two; if it be in itself, they are yet two; the comprehending and the comprehended. According to these doctrines, the nature of things is no other than a shadow, either vain or absolutely false.

This way of speaking in a Christian man has ever seemed to me very indiscreet and irreverent: "God cannot die; God cannot contradict himself; God cannot do this, or that." I do not like to have the divine power so limited by the laws of men's mouths; and the idea which presents itself to us in those propositions, ought to be more religiously and reverently expressed.

Our speaking has its failings and defects, as well as all the rest: grammar is that which creates most disturbances in the world: our suits only spring from disputation as to the interpretation of laws: and most wars proceed from the inability of

[1] Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Protagoras.* [2] Seneca, *Ep.*, 88.
[3] Aristotle, *Metaphys.*, lib. i., c. 5. Cicero, *Quæst. Acad.*, iv. 37, attributes the saying to Xenophanes.
[4] "This Zeno must be the Zeno of Eleus, the disciple of Parmenides. The Pyrrhonians reckoned him one of their sect. Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pyrrho*, lib. ix., s. 72. Montaigne here has also copied Seneca, *Ep.*, 88, where after these words, 'Were I to believe Parmenides, there is nothing besides one,' he adds immediately: 'If, Zeno, there is not so much as one.'"—Coste.

ministers clearly to express the conventions and treaties of amity among princes. How many quarrels, and those of how great importance, has the doubt of the meaning of this syllable *Hoc* created in the world?[1] Let us take the conclusion that logic itself presents us as manifestly clear: if you say it is fine weather, and that you say true, it is, then, fine weather. Is not this a very certain form of speaking? and yet it will deceive us; that it will do so, let us follow the example: if you say, I lie, and that you say true, then you do lie. The art, reason, and force of the conclusion of this are the same with the other; and yet we are gravelled. The Pyrrhonian philosophers, I see, cannot express their general conception in any kind of speaking; for they would require a new language on purpose; ours is all formed of affirmative propositions, which are totally hostile to them; insomuch that when they say, "I doubt," they are presently taken by the throat, to make them confess that at least they know and are assured of this, that they do doubt. And so they have been compelled to shelter themselves under this medicinal comparison, without which their humour would be inexplicable: when they pronounce, "I know not": or, "I doubt"; they say that this proposition carries off itself with the rest, no more nor less than rhubarb that drives out the ill humours and carries itself off with them.[2] This fancy is more certainly understood by interrogation: What do I know? as I bear it in the emblem of a balance.

See what use we make of this irreverent way of speaking[3]: in the present disputes about our

[1] In allusion to the dispute as to transubstantiation.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, ix. 76.

[3] *i.e.* that God cannot do this or that. But the question whether God is omnipotent has been raised on logical grounds of late years in a pamphlet by Professor Attwell, with the title, "Is God Omnipotent?"

religion, if you press the adversaries too hard, they will roundly tell you, "that it is not in the power of God to make it so that His body should be in paradise and upon earth, and in several places at once." And see what advantage the old scoffer[1] makes of this! "At least," says he, "it is no little consolation to man to see that God cannot do all things; for he cannot kill himself though he would, which is the greatest privilege we have in our condition: he cannot make mortals immortal, nor revive the dead, nor make it so that he who has lived has not, nor that he who has had honours, has not had them, having no other power over the past than that of oblivion. And that the comparison of a man to God may yet be made out by pleasant examples, he cannot order it so that twice ten shall not be twenty." This is what he says, and what a Christian ought to take heed shall not escape his lips; whereas, on the contrary, it seems as if all men studied this impudent kind of blasphemous language, to reduce God to their own measure:—

"Cras vel atra
Nube polum Pater occupato,
Vel sole puro, non tamen irritum,
Quodcumque retro est, efficiet, neque
Diffinget, infectumque reddet,
Quod fugiens semel hora vexit."[2]

When we say, that the infinity of ages, as well past as to come, are but one instant with God; that His goodness, wisdom, and power are the same with His essence, our mouths speak it, but

[1] "That scoffer Pliny," ed. of 1580.

[2] "Let it shine or rain to-morrow, this cannot alter the past, nor uncreate and render void that which the fleeting hour has once brought."—Horace, *Od.*, iii. 29, 43.

our understandings apprehend it not. And yet such is our outrageous opinion of ourselves, that we must make the divinity pass through our sieve; and from this proceed all the dreams and errors with which the world abounds, when we reduce and weigh in our balance a thing so far above our poise:—

"Mirum, quo procedat improbitas cordis humani, parvulo aliquo invitata successu."[1]

How magisterially and insolently do the Stoics reprove Epicurus for maintaining that the truly good and happy Being appertained only to God, and that the Sage had nothing but a shadow and resemblance of it? How daringly have they bound God to destiny (a thing that, by my consent, none that bears the name of a Christian shall ever do again); while Thales, Plato, and Pythagoras have enslaved him to necessity. This arrogance of attempting to discover God with our weak eyes, has been the cause that an eminent person of our nation[2] has attributed to the divinity a corporal form; and is the reason of what happens amongst us every day of attributing to God important events, by a special appointment: because they sway with us, they conclude that they also sway with Him, and that He has a more intent and vigilant regard to them than to others of less moment, or of ordinary course:—

"Magna Dii curant; parva negligunt"[3]:

[1] "'Tis wonderful to what the wickedness of man's heart will proceed, invited by some success."—Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, ii. 23.

[2] The former editions mention Tertullian as the person intended; but he was a Carthaginian. He, or whoever else may be meant, was most assuredly not alone in his anthropomorphy.

[3] "The gods concern themselves with great matters, disregard the small."—Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, ii. 66.

observe His example; He will clear this to you by His reason:—

"Nec in regnis quidem reges omnia minima curant"[1];

as if to that King of kings it were more and less to subvert a kingdom or to move the leaf of a tree: or as if His providence acted after another manner in inclining the event of a battle than in the leap of a flea. The hand of His government is laid upon everything after the same manner, with the same power and order: our interest does nothing towards it; our inclinations and measures sway nothing with Him:—

"Deus ita artifex magnus in magnis, ut minor non sit in parvis."[2]

Our arrogance sets this blasphemous comparison ever before us. Because our employments are a burthen to us, Strato has courteously been pleased to exempt the gods from all offices, as their priests are; he makes nature produce and support all things; and with her weights and motions make up the several parts of the world, discharging human nature from the awe of divine judgments:—

"Quod beatum æternumque sit, id nec habere negotii quidquam, nec exhibere alteri."[3]

Nature wills that in like things there should be a like relation: the infinite number of mortals, therefore, concludes a like number of immortals; the infinite things that kill and destroy presuppose as many that preserve and profit. As the souls

[1] "Neither do kings in their dominions take notice of all minor matters."—Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, iii. 35.

[2] "God is thus a great artificer in great things, that He may not be less so in small ones."—St. Augustin, *De Civ. Dei*, xi. 22.

[3] "What is blessed and eternal, has neither any business itself nor gives any to another."—Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, i. 17.

of the Gods without tongue, eyes, or ear, each of them feels amongst themselves what the others feel, and judge our thoughts; so the souls of men, when at liberty and loosed from the body, either by sleep, or some ecstasy; divine, foretell, and see things, which, whilst joined to the body, they could not see. "Men," says St. Paul, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man."[1] Do but take notice of the jugglery in the ancient deification: after the grand and stately pomp of the funeral, so soon as the fire began to mount to the top of the pyramid and to catch hold of the hearse where the body lay, they, at the same time, turned out an eagle, which, flying upward, signified that the soul went into Paradise; we have still a thousand medals, and particularly of that honest woman Faustina,[2] where this eagle is represented carrying these deified souls with their heels upwards, towards heaven. 'Tis a pity that we should fool ourselves with our own fopperies and inventions:—

"Quod finxere, timent"[3]:

like children who are frightened with the face of their companion that they themselves have smutted:—

"Quasi quidquam infelicius sit homine, cui sua figmenta dominantur."[4]

'Tis far from honouring Him who made us, to honour him whom we have made. Augustus had

[1] *Romans*, v. 22, 23.

[2] The term is here, of course, applied ironically.

[3] "They fear what they themselves have invented."—Lucan, i. 486.

[4] "As if anything could be more unhappy than man, who is domineered over by his own fancies." Pascal copies this notion in his *Pensées*.

more temples than Jupiter, served with as much religion and belief of miracles. The Thasians, in return for the benefits they had received from Agesilaus, coming to bring him word that they had canonised him: "Has your nation," said he to them,[1] "the power to make gods of whom they please? Pray first deify some one amongst yourselves, and when I see what advantage he has by it, I will thank you for your offer." Man is certainly stark mad; he cannot make a flea, and yet he will be making gods by dozens. Hear what Trismegistus says in praise of our sufficiency: "Of all the wonderful things, it surmounts all wonder that man could find out the divine nature and make it." And take here the arguments of the school of philosophy itself:—

> "Nosse cui divos et cœli numina soli,
> Aut soli nescire, datum"[2]:

"If there be a God,[3] He is a corporeal creature; if He be a corporeal creature, He has sense; and if He has sense, He is subject to corruption. If He be without a body, He is without a soul, and consequently without action: and if He have a body it is perishable." Is not here a triumph? We are incapable of having made the world; there must, then, be some more excellent nature that has put a hand to the work. It were a foolish and ridiculous arrogance to esteem ourselves the most perfect thing of this universe: there must, then, be something that is better and more perfect, and that is God. When you see a stately and stupendous edifice, though you

[1] Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*

[2] "To whom alone it is given to know the gods and deities of heaven, or know that we can know them not."—Lucan, i. 452.

[3] This passage is taken from Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, ii. and iii.

do not know who is the owner of it, you would yet conclude it was not built for rats: and this divine structure that we behold of the celestial palace, have we not reason to believe that it is the residence of some possessor, who is much greater than we? Is not the highest always the most worthy; and we are placed lowest to Him. Nothing without a soul and without reason can produce a living creature capable of reason; the world produces us; the world, then, has soul and reason. Every part of us is less than we: we are part of the world; the world, therefore, is endued with wisdom and reason, and that more abundantly than we. 'Tis a fine thing to have a great government: the government of the world, then, appertains to some happy nature. The stars do us no harm: they are, then, full of goodness. We have need of nourishment; then so have the gods also; and they feed upon the vapours of the earth. Worldly goods are not goods to God; therefore they are not goods to us. Offending, and being offended, are equally testimonies of imbecility: 'tis, therefore, folly to fear God. God is good by His nature; man by his industry, which is more. The divine and human wisdom have no other distinction, but that the first is eternal: but duration is no accession to wisdom; therefore, we are companions. We have life, reason, and liberty; we esteem goodness, charity, and justice: these qualities, then, are in Him."[1] In fine, the building and destroying the conditions of the divinity are forged by man, according as they bear relation to himself. What a pattern! what a model! Let us stretch, let us raise and swell human qualities as much as we please: puff up

[1] The preceding passages are taken from Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, lib. ii., *passim*.

thyself, poor creature, yet more and more, and more :—

"Non, si te ruperis, inquit."[1]

"Profecto non Deum, quem cogitare non possunt, sed semet ipsos pro illo cogitantes, non illum, sed seipsos, non illi, sed sibi comparant."[2]

In natural things the effects but half relate to their causes : what about this ? it is above the order of nature ; its condition is too elevated, too remote, and too mighty to permit itself to be bound and fettered by our conclusions. 'Tis not through ourselves that we arrive at that place : our ways lie too low : we are no nearer heaven on the top of Mont Cenis than at the bottom of the sea : take the distance with your astrolabe. They debase God even to the carnal knowledge of women, to so many times, to so many propagations : Paulina the wife of Saturninus, a matron of great reputation at Rome, thinking she lay with the god Serapis,[3] found herself in the arms of a lover of hers, through the pandarism of the priests of the temple. Varro, the most subtle and most learned of all the Latin authors in his book of theology, writes[4] that the sacristan of Hercules' temple, throwing dice with one hand for himself and with the other for Hercules, played after that manner with him for a supper and a wench : if he won, at the expense of the offerings : if he lost, at his own. He lost, and paid the supper and the wench. Her name was

[1] "Not if thou burst, said he."—Horace, *Sat.*, ii. 3, 19.

[2] "Certainly they do not imagine God, whom they cannot imagine ; but they imagine themselves in His stead : they do not compare Him, but themselves, not to Him, but to themselves."—St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei.*, xii. 15.

[3] Or Anubis, according to Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, lib. xviii., c. 4.

[4] St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, vi.

Laurentina: she saw by night this god in her arms, who, moreover, told her that the first she met the next day, should give her a heavenly reward; which proved to be Taruncius,[1] a rich young man, who took her home to his house, and in time left her his heiress. She, in her turn, thinking to do a thing that would be pleasing to this god, left the people of Rome her heirs, and therefore had divine honours voted to her. As if it were not sufficient that Plato was originally descended from the gods by a double line, and that he had Neptune for the common father of his race,[2] it was certainly believed at Athens that Aristo, having a mind to enjoy the fair Perictione, could not, and was warned by the god Apollo in a dream to leave her unpolluted and untouched till she should first be brought to bed.[3] These were the father and mother of Plato. How many ridiculous stories are there of like cuckoldings committed by the gods against poor mortals? and how many husbands injuriously disgraced in favour of their children? In the Mohammedan religion, there are plenty of Merlins,[4] found by the belief of the people, that is to say, children without fathers, spiritual, divinely conceived in the wombs of virgins, and who bear a name that signifies as much in their language.

We are to observe that to every creature nothing is more dear and estimable than its own being; the lion, the eagle, dolphin prizing nothing beyond

[1] Or Tarutius. Plutarch, *Life of Romulus*, c. 5, who calls the lady Laurentia, and says that Tarutius was a very old man.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato*, book iii.

[3] Idem, *ibid.*; Plutarch, *Table Talk*, viii. 1.

[4] Montaigne probably knew Merlin in the way, and to the extent, that he was generally known in the end of the sixteenth century. He here alludes to him as the miraculous fatherless child.

their own kind, and that everything refers the qualities of all other things to its own proper qualities, which we may indeed extend or contract, but that's all; for beyond that relation and principle, our imagination cannot go, can guess at nothing else, nor possibly go out thence or stretch beyond it. From which spring these ancient conclusions: "Of all forms, the most beautiful is that of man; therefore God must be of that form. No one can be happy without virtue, nor virtue be without reason, and reason cannot inhabit anywhere but in a human shape: God is therefore clothed in a human shape" [1]:—

"Ita est informatum anticipatumque mentibus nostris, ut homini, quum de Deo cogitet, forma occurrat humana."[2]

Therefore it was that Xenophanes pleasantly said,[3] that if beasts frame any gods to themselves, as 'tis likely they do, they make them certainly such as themselves are, and glorify themselves therein as we do. For why may not a goose say thus: "All parts of the universe have I an interest in; the earth serves me to walk upon, the sun to light me, the stars to spread their influence upon me; I have such an advantage by the winds, such conveniences by the waters: there is nothing that yon heavenly roof looks upon so favourably as me; I am the darling of nature. Is it not man that feeds, lodges, and serves me? 'Tis for me that he sows and grinds; if he eats me, he does the same by his fellow-man, and so do I the worms that kill and devour him." As much might

[1] Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, 18.

[2] "It is so imprinted in our minds, and the fancy is so prepossessed with it, that when a man thinks of God, a human figure ever presents itself to the imagination."—Idem, *ibid.*, 27.

[3] Eusebius, *Prep. Evangel.*, xiii. 13.

be said by a crane, and more magnificently, upon the account of the liberty of his flight, and the possession of that high and beautiful region :—

"Tam blanda conciliatrix, et tam sui est lena ipsa natura."[1]

By the same consequence, the destinies are, then, for us, for us the world ; it shines, it thunders for us ; creator and creatures all are for us : 'tis the mark and point to which the universality of things is directed. Look into the records that philosophy has kept, for two thousand years and more, of the affairs of heaven ; the gods all that while have neither acted nor spoken but for man : she does not allow them any other consultation or vocation. See them, here, against us in war :—

"Domitosque Herculeâ manu
Telluris juvenes, unde periculum
Fulgens contremuit domus
Saturni veteris."[2]

And here see them participate of our troubles, to make a return for having so often shared in theirs :—

"Neptunus muros, magnoque emota tridenti
Fundamenta quatit, totamque a sedibus urbem
Eruit : hic Juno Scæas sævissima portas
Prima tenet."[3]

The Caunians, jealous of the authority of their own especial gods, arm themselves on the days of

[1] "So flattering and wheedling is nature to herself."—Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, i. 27.

[2] "The sons of earth, subdued by the hand of Hercules, in the rude shock made old Saturn's refulgent palace shake."—Horace, *Od*,. ii. 12, 6.

[3] "Neptune with his massive trident made the walls and foundations shake, and overturned the whole city ; here most cruel Juno first holds the Scæan gates."—*Æneid*, ii. 610.

their devotion, and run all about their precincts cutting and slashing the air with their swords, by that means to drive away and banish all foreign gods out of their territory.[1] Their powers are limited according to our necessity; this divinity cures horses, that men, this the plague, that the scurf, that the cough; one, one sort of itch, another another:—

"Adeo minimis etiam rebus prava religio inserit deos."[2]

This makes the grapes grow, this the waters; that has presidence over lechery; this the superintendence over merchandise; for every sort of artisan a god: this has his province and credit in the east, that in the west:—

"Hic illius arma . . . Hic currus fuit."[3]

"O sancte Apollo qui umbilicum certum terrarum optines!"[4]

"Pallada Cecropidæ, Minoia Creta Dianam,
Vulcanum tellus Hypsipylæa colit,
Junonem Sparte, Pelopeiadesque Mycenæ;
Pinigerum Fauni Mænalis ora caput;
Mars Latio venerandus erat"[5]:

this deity has only one town or one family in his possession; that lives alone; this in company either voluntary or upon necessity:—

"Junctaque sunt magno templa nepotis avo"[6];

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[1] Herodotus, i. 172.

[2] "At such a rate does false religion create gods for the most contemptible uses."—Livy, xxvii. 23.

[3] "Here were her arms, here her chariot."—*Æneid*, i. 16.

[4] "O sacred Phœbus, who hast sway over the navel of the earth."—Cicero, *De Div.*, ii. 56.

[5] "The Athenians worship Pallas; Minoian Crete, Diana; Vulcan is worshipped on the Lemnian shore; Sparta and Mycene adore Juno; the Arcadians worship Faunus; Mars in Latium was adored."—Ovid, *Fast.*, iii. 81.

[6] "Temples to the grandson are joined to that of the great-grandfather."—Idem, *ibid.*, i. 294.

there are some so common and mean (for the number amounts to six-and-thirty thousand[1]) that they must pack five or six together to produce one ear of corn, and thence take their several names; three to a door, that of the plank, that of the hinge, and that of the threshold; four to a child, protectors of his swathing clouts, his drink, meat, sucking; some certain, some uncertain and doubtful; some that are not yet entered paradise:—

> "Quos, quoniam cœli nondum dignamur honore,
> Quas dedimus, certe terras habitare sinamus."[2]

There are amongst them physicians, poets, lawyers: some, a mean betwixt the divine and human nature, mediators betwixt God and us; adored with a certain second and diminutive sort of adoration; infinite in titles and offices; some good, others evil; some old and decrepit, some that are mortal: for Chrysippus[3] was of opinion that in the last conflagration of the world all the gods will have to die except Jupiter. Man forges a thousand pretty societies betwixt God and him: is He not his countryman?—

> "Jovis incunabula Creten."[4]

This is the excuse that, upon consideration of this subject, Scævola, a high priest, and Varro, a great divine, in their time make us: "That it is necessary the people should be ignorant of many things that are true, and believe many things that are false:—

[1] Hesiod, *Opera et Dies*, ver. 252, says thirty thousand.
[2] "Whom, since we think them not yet worthy of heaven, we permit to inhabit the earth we have given."—Ovid, *Met.*, i. 194.
[3] Plutarch, *On the Common Conceptions, &c.*
[4] "Crete, the cradle of Jove."—Ovid, *Met.*, viii. 99.

"Quum veritatem, quâ liberetur, inquirat: credatur ei expedire, quod fallitur."[1]

Human eyes cannot perceive things but by the forms they know: and do we not remember what a leap miserable Phaeton took for attempting to govern the reins of his father's horses with a mortal hand? Our mind falls into as great a profundity, and is after the same manner bruised and shattered by its own temerity. If you ask philosophy of what matter is heaven, of what the sun, what answer will she return, but that it is of iron, with Anaxagoras of stone, or some other matter that she makes use of? If a man inquire of Zeno what Nature is? "A mechanical fire," says he,[2] "proper for generation, proceeding regularly." Archimedes, master of that science which attributes to itself the precedence before all others for truth and certainty: "the sun," says he, "is a god of red-hot iron." Was not this a fine imagination, extracted from the beauty and inevitable necessity of geometrical demonstrations? yet not so inevitable and useful, but that Socrates[3] thought it was enough to know so much of geometry only as to measure the land a man bought or sold; and that Polyænus,[4] who had been a great and famous master in it, despised it as full of falsity and manifest vanity, after he had once tasted the delicate fruits of the effeminate garden of Epicurus. Socrates in Xenophon[5] concerning this proposition of Anaxagoras, reputed by antiquity learned above all others in celestial and divine matters, says that he had disordered his brain, as all men do who too

[1] "Seeing he inquires into the truth, so that he may be made free, 'tis thought fit he would be deceived."—St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, iv. 31.

[2] Cicero, *De Naturâ Deor.*, ii. 22.

[3] Xenophon, *Mem. of Socrates*, iv. 7, 2.

[4] Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 38.

[5] *Ubi suprâ.*

immoderately search into knowledges which nothing appertain unto them: when he made the sun to be a burning stone, he did not consider that a stone does not shine in the fire; and which is worse, that it will there consume; and in making the sun and fire one, that fire does not turn complexions black in shining upon them; that we are able to look fixedly upon fire: and that fire kills herbs and plants. 'Tis Socrates' opinion, and mine too, that it is best judged of heaven not to judge of it at all. Plato having occasion in his *Timæus* to speak of dæmons: "This undertaking," says he, "exceeds our ability; we are to believe those ancients who said they were begotten by them: 'tis against reason to refuse faith to the children of the gods, though what they say should not be proved by any necessary or probable reasons, seeing they engage to speak of domestic and quite familiar things."

Let us see if we have a little more light in the knowledge of human and natural things. Is it not a ridiculous attempt for us to devise for those, to whom by our own confession our knowledge is not able to attain, another body, and to lend a false form of our own invention: as is manifest in the motion of the planets, to which, seeing our wits cannot possibly arrive nor conceive their natural conduct, we lend them material, heavy, and substantial springs of our own, by which to move:—

> "Temo aureus, aurea summæ
> Curvatura rotæ, radiorum argenteus ordo"[1]—

you would say that we had had coach-makers, wheelwrights, and painters that went up on high to make engines of various movements, and to range

[1] "A golden beam, wheels of gold, silver spokes."—Ovid, *Met.*, ii. 107:

the wheels and interlacings of the heavenly bodies of differing colours about the axis of Necessity, according to Plato[1]:—

> "Mundus domus est maxima rerum,
> Quam quinque altitonæ fragmine zonæ
> Cingunt, per quam limbus pictus bis sex signis
> Stellimicantibus, altus in obliquo æthere, lunæ
> Bigas acceptat"[2]:

these are all dreams and fantastic follies. Why will not Nature please, once for all, to lay open her bosom to us, and plainly discover to us the means and conduct of her movements, and prepare our eyes to see them? Good God! what blunders, what mistakes should we discover in our poor science! I am mistaken if it apprehend any one thing as it really is: and I shall depart hence more ignorant of all other things than of my own ignorance.

Have I not read in Plato this divine saying, that "Nature is nothing but an enigmatic poesy"?[3] as if a man might, peradventure, say, a veiled and shaded picture, breaking out here and there with an infinite variety of false lights to puzzle our conjectures:—

[1] *Republic*, x. 12.

[2] "The world is the great home of all things, which five thundering zones enfold, through which a girdle, painted with twelve glittering constellations, shines high in the oblique roof, marks the diurnal course, and receives the biga of the moon."—Varro *in Catal.*

[3] "Montaigne has here mistaken Plato's sense, whose words, in *Alcibiades*, ii., p. 42, C., are these: *Ἐστι τε φυσει ποιητικη ἡ συμπᾶσα αἰνιγματώδης*—'All poetry is in its nature enigmatical.' Plato says this by reason of a verse in Homer's Margites, which he explains, and which, indeed, has something in it that is enigmatical. Either Montaigne did not see this passage in Plato, or else he read it without closely examining it. Nature is certainly a riddle with respect to us; but it does not appear very plain in what sense it may be called enigmatical poetry. Montaigne himself, to whom this term appears so divine, does not explain it to us very clearly."—Coste.

"Latent ista omnia crassis occultata et circumfusa tenebris; ut nulla acies humani ingenii tanta sit, quæ penetrare in cœlum, terram intrare possit."[1]

And certainly philosophy is no other than a sophisticated poesy. Whence do the ancient writers extract their authorities but from the poets? and the first of them were poets themselves, and wrote accordingly. Plato himself is but a disconnected poet: Timon injuriously calls him the great forger of miracles.[2] All superhuman sciences make use of the poetic style. Just as women for themselves make use of teeth of ivory where the natural are wanting, and instead of their true complexion make one of some foreign matter; legs of cloth or felt, and plumpness of cotton, and in the sight and knowledge of every one paint, patch, and trick up themselves with false or borrowed beauty: so does science (and even our law itself has, they say, legal fictions whereon it builds the truth of its justice); she gives us, in presupposition and for current pay, things which she herself informs us were invented: for these epicycles, excentric and concentric, which astrology makes use of to carry on the motions of the stars, she gives us as the best she could contrive upon that subject; as also, in all the rest, philosophy presents us, not that which really is or what she really believes, but what she has contrived with the most plausible likelihood and the fairest aspect. Plato[3] upon the subject of the state of human bodies and those of beasts: "I should know that what I have said is truth," says he, "had I the confirmation of an oracle: but this

[1] "All those things lie concealed and involved in so caliginous an obscurity, that no point of human wit can be so sharp as to pierce heaven or penetrate the earth."—Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 39.

[2] Or, rather, of platitudes. Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato*, 22.

[3] In the *Timæus*.

I will affirm, that what I have said is the most likely to be true of anything I could say."

'Tis not to heaven only that she sends her ropes, engines, and wheels; let us consider a little what she says of ourselves and of our contexture: there is not more retrogradation, trepidation, accession, recession, aberration, in the stars and celestial bodies than they have found out in this poor little human body. Truly they have good reason upon that very account to call it the Little World,[1] so many tools and parts have they employed to erect and build it. To accommodate the motions they see in man, the various functions and faculties that we find in ourselves, into how many parts have they divided the soul? in how many places lodged, into how many orders have they divided, to how many stories have they raised this poor creature man, besides those that are natural and to be perceived? and how many offices and vocations have they assigned him? They make of him an imaginary public thing; 'tis a subject that they hold and handle; and they have full power granted to them to rip, place, displace, piece, and stuff it, every one according to his own fancy, and yet to this day they possess it not. They cannot, not in reality only but even in dreams, so govern it that there will not be some cadence or sound that will escape their architecture, enormous as it is, and botched with a thousand false and fantastic patches. And it is not reason to excuse them; for though we are content with painters when they paint heaven, earth, seas, mountains, remote islands, if they gave us but some slight mark of them, and, as of things unknown, are satisfied with a feigned and obscure shadowing forth; yet when they come

[1] *Microcosmos.*

to draw us by the life, or any other subject which is known and familiar to us, we then require of them a perfect and exact representation of lineaments and colours, and despise them if they fail in it.

I am very well pleased with the Milesian girl who, observing the philosopher Thales to be always contemplating the celestial arch and with eyes ever gazing upward, laid something in his way that he might stumble at, to put him in mind that it would be time to take up his thoughts about things in the clouds when he had provided for those under his feet. Certes, she advised him very well, rather to look to himself than to gaze at heaven[1]; for, as Democritus says, by the mouth of Cicero:—

"Quod est ante pedes nemo spectat: cœli scrutantur plagas."[2]

But our condition will have it so, that the knowledge of what we have in hand is as remote from us, and as much above the clouds as that of the stars: as Socrates says in Plato, that whoever tampers with philosophy may be reproached, as Thales was by the woman, that he sees nothing of that which is before him; for every philosopher is ignorant of what his neighbour does; yes, and of what he does himself, and is ignorant of what they both are, whether beasts or men.

And these people who find Sebonde's arguments too weak, who are ignorant of nothing, who govern the world, and who know all things:—

[1] She was maid-servant to Thales, according to Plato, from whom this story is taken; but he does not say that he stumbled at anything laid in his way by his servant, but that, as he was walking along, with his eyes lifted up to the stars, he fell into a well.—Coste.

[2] "No man regards what is under his feet; they are always prying towards heaven."—Cicero, *De Divin.*, ii. 3. It is not a saying of Democritus, but a line of poetry directed by Cicero against Democritus.

"Quæ mare compescant causæ ; quid temperet annum,
Stellæ sponte suâ, jussæve, vagentur et errent ;
Quid premat obscurum lunæ, quid proferat orbem,
Quid velit et possit rerum concordia discors" [1] ;

have they not sometimes in their books sounded the difficulties they have met with of knowing their own being? We see very well that the finger moves, that the foot moves, that some parts have motion of themselves without our leave, and that others work by our direction ; that one sort of apprehension occasions blushing, another paleness ; such an imagination works upon the spleen only, another upon the brain ; one occasions laughter, another tears ; another stupefies and astounds all our senses and arrests the movement of our members ; at one object the stomach will rise, at another a member that lies somewhat lower : but how a spiritual impression should make such a breach into a massive and solid subject, and the nature of the connection and contexture of these admirable springs and movements, never man yet knew:—

"Omnia incertâ ratione, et in naturæ majestate, abdita," [2]

says Pliny ; and St. Augustin :—

"Modus, quo corporibus adhærent spiritus . . . omnia mirus est, nec comprehendi ab homine potest ; et hoc ipse homo est" [3] ;

[1] "What governs the sea, what rules the year, whether the planets move spontaneously or under compulsion, what obscures the moon, what the concordant discord of all things will or can effect."—Horace, *Epist.*, i. 12, 16.

[2] "All things are uncertain in reason, and concealed in the majesty of nature."—Pliny, ii. 37.

[3] "The manner whereby souls adhere to bodies is altogether marvellous, and cannot be conceived by man, and this union is man."—St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, xxi. 10.

and yet it is not so much as doubted; for the opinions of men are received according to ancient beliefs, by authority and upon trust, as if it were religion and law: that which is commonly held about it is an accepted jargon; this assumed truth, with all its clutter of arguments and proofs, is admitted as a firm and solid body that is no more to be shaken, no further to be judged of; on the contrary, every one, as best he may, corroborates and fortifies this received belief with the utmost power of his reason, which is a supple utensil, pliable and to be accommodated to any figure: and thus the world comes to be filled with lies and fopperies. The reason that men do not doubt of so few things is that they never examine common impressions; they do not dig to the root where the faults and weakness lie; they only debate about the branches: they do not ask whether such and such a thing be true, but if it has been so and so understood; it is not inquired whether Galen said anything to purpose, but whether he said this or that. In truth, there was very good reason that this curb and constraint on the liberty of our judgments and this tyranny over our beliefs should be extended to the schools and arts; the god of scholastic knowledge is Aristotle; 'tis irreligion to question any of his decrees, as it was those of Lycurgus at Sparta; his doctrine is magisterial law, which, peradventure, is as false as another. I do not know why I should not as willingly accept either the ideas of Plato, or the atoms of Epicurus, or the *plenum* and *vacuum* of Leucippus and Democritus, or the water of Thales, or the infinity of nature of Anaximander,[1] or the air of Diogenes, or the numbers and symmetry of Pythagoras, or

[1] Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrr.*, iii. 4.

the infinity of Parmenides, or the One of Musæus, or the water and fire of Apollodorus, or the similar parts of Anaxagoras, or the discord and friendship of Empedocles, or the fire of Heraclitus, or any other opinion of that infinite confusion of opinions and determinations which this fine human reason produces by its certitude and clear-sightedness in everything it meddles withal, as I should the opinion of Aristotle upon this subject of the principles of natural things; which principles he builds of three pieces, matter, form, and privation. And what can be more vain than to make inanity itself the cause of the production of things? privation is a negative: by what fancy could he make them the cause and original of things that are? And yet all this was not to be controverted, but as an exercise of logic; nothing was to be discussed to bring it into doubt, but only to defend the author of the school from foreign objections: his authority is the *non ultrâ*, beyond which it was not permitted to inquire.

It is very easy upon granted foundations to build whatever we please: for according to the law and ordering of this beginning, the other parts of the structure are easily carried on without any mishap. By this way, we find our reason well-grounded and discourse at a venture; for our masters prepossess and gain beforehand as much room in our belief as is necessary for them towards concluding afterwards what they please, as geometricians do by their postulates; the consent and approbation we allow them, giving them power to draw us to the right and left, and to whirl us about at their own pleasure. Whoever is believed upon his presuppositions is our master and our god: he will take the level of his foundations so ample and

so easy that by them he may mount us up to the clouds, if he so please. In this practice and communication of science we have taken the saying of Pythagoras, "that every expert ought to be believed in his own art," for currency; the dialectician refers the signification of words to the grammarian; the rhetorician borrows the state of arguments from the dialectician; the poet his measures from the musician; the geometrician his proportions from the arithmetician; the metaphysicians take physical conjectures as their foundations; for every science has its principles presupposed, by which human judgment is everywhere limited. If you drive against the barrier where the principal error lies, they have presently this sentence in their mouths; "that there is no disputing with persons who deny principles"; now men can have no principles, if not revealed to them by the Divinity; of all the rest, the beginning, the middle and the end are nothing but dream and vapour. To those who contend upon presupposition, we must, on the contrary, presuppose to them the same axiom upon which the dispute is: for every human presupposition, and every declaration has as much authority one as another, if reason do not make the difference. Wherefore they are all to be put into the balance, and first the general and those that tyrannise over us. The persuasion of certainty is a certain testimony of folly and extreme uncertainty; and there are not a more foolish sort of men, nor that are less philosophers, than the Philodoxes of Plato[1]: we must inquire whether fire be hot,

[1] "'Persons who are possessed with opinions of which they know not the grounds, whose heads are intoxicated with words, who see and affect only the appearances of things.' This is taken from Plato, who has characterised them very particularly at the end of the fifth book of his *Republic*."—Coste.

whether snow be white, if we know of any such things as hard or soft.

And as to those answers of which they made old stories; as to him who doubted if there were any such thing as heat, whom they bid throw himself into the fire; and to him who denied the coldness of ice, whom they bad to put a cake of ice into his bosom; these are pitiful things, altogether unworthy of the profession of philosophy. If they had let us alone in our natural state, to receive the appearance of things without us according as they present themselves to us by our senses, and had permitted us to follow our own natural appetites, simple and regulated by the condition of our birth, they might have had reason to talk at that rate; but 'tis from them that we have learned to make ourselves judges of the world; 'tis from them that we derive this fancy, "that human reason is controller-general of all that is without and within the roof of heaven, that comprehends everything, that can do everything, by the means of which everything is known and understood." This answer would be good amongst cannibals, who enjoy the happiness of a long, quiet, and peaceable life without Aristotle's precepts, and without the knowledge of the name of physics; this answer would, peradventure, be of more value and greater force than all those they borrow from their reason and invention; of this all animals would be capable with us, and all things where the power of the law of nature is yet pure and simple; but this they have renounced. They must not tell us, "It is true, for you see and feel it to be so": they must tell me whether I really feel what I think I feel; and if I do feel it, they must then tell me why I feel it, and how, and what; let them tell me the name,

original, parts and junctures of heat and cold; the qualities of agent and patient; or let them give up their profession, which is not to admit or approve of anything but by the way of reason; that is their test in all sorts of essays: but, certainly, 'tis a test full of falsity, error, weakness, and defect.

How can we better prove this than by itself? if we are not to believe her, when speaking of herself, she can hardly be thought fit to judge of foreign things: if she know anything, it must at least be her own being and abode; she is in the soul, and either a part or an effect of it; for true and essential reason, for which we by a false colour borrow the name, is lodged in the bosom of the Almighty; there is her habitation and retreat, 'tis thence she imparts her rays, when God is pleased to impart any beam of it to mankind, as Pallas issued from her father's head to communicate herself to the world.

Now let us see what human reason tells us of herself, and of the soul: not of the soul in general, of which almost all philosophy makes the celestial and first bodies participants; nor of that which Thales[1] attributed even to things reputed inanimate, drawn on so to do by the consideration of the loadstone; but of that which appertains to us, and that we ought the best to know:—

> "Ignoratur enim, quæ sit natura animai;
> Nata sit, an, contra, nascentibus insinuetur,
> Et simul intereat nobiscum morte dirempta,
> An tenebras Orci visat vastasque lacunas,
> An pecudes alias divinitus insinuet se."[2]

[1] Diogenes Laertius, i. 24.

[2] "None know the nature of the soul, whether it be born with us, or be infused into us at our birth; whether it dies with us, or descends to the shades below, or whether the gods transmit it into other animals."—Lucretius, i. 113.

Crates and Dicæarchus[1] were taught by it,[2] that there was no soul at all, but that the body stirs by a natural motion; Plato,[3] that it was a substance moving of itself; Thales, a nature without repose[4]: Asclepiades, an exercising of the senses: Hesiod and Anaximander, a thing composed of earth and water; Parmenides, of earth and fire; Empedocles, of blood[5]:—

"Sanguineam vomit ille animam,"[6]

Posidonius, Cleanthes, and Galien, that it was heat or a hot complexion:—

"Igneus est ollis vigor, et cœlestis origo"[7];

Hippocrates, a spirit diffused all over the body; Varro, that it was an air received at the mouth, heated in the lungs, moistened in the heart, and diffused throughout the whole body; Zeno, the quintessence of the four elements[8]; Heraclides Ponticus, that it was the light; Xenocrates and the

[1] "Apud Sext. Empir. *Pyrrh. Hypot.*, lib. ii., cap. 5, p. 57, et adv. Mathem., περὶ ἀνθρώπου, p. 201. 'Dicæarchus Phærecratem quendam Phthiotam senem—disserentem inducit nihil esse omnino animum,'" &c.—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, lib. i., c. 10.

[2] *i.e.* Human reason.

[3] *De Legibus*, x.

[4] According to Plutarch, *De Placitis Philosophorum*, lib. iv., cap. 2, which moves of itself, αὐτοκίνητον.

[5] "Empedocles animum esse censet, cordi suffusum sanguine."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, lib. i., cap. 6. Empedocles was nearest to the truth.

[6] "He vomits his bloody soul."—Virgil, *Æneid*, ix. 349.

[7] "Their vigour is of fire, and a heavenly birth."—Idem, *ibid.*, vi. 730.

[8] I know not where Montaigne had this; for Cicero expressly says that this quintessence, or fifth nature, is a thought of Aristotle, who makes the soul to be composed of it, and that Zeno thought the soul to be fire.—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, lib. i., cap. 9 and 10. After this Cicero adds, "That Aristotle calls the mind, which he derives from the fifth nature, Entelecheia, a new-coined word, signifying a perpetual motion."—Coste.

Egyptians, a moveable number; the Chaldæans, a virtue without any determinate form;

> "Habitum quemdam vitalem corporis esse,
> Harmoniam Græci quam dicunt"[1]:

let us not forget Aristotle, who held the soul to be that which naturally causes the body to move, which he calls Entelechia, with as cold an invention as any of the rest; for he neither speaks of the essence, nor of the original, nor of the nature of the soul, but only takes notice of the effect; Lactantius, Seneca, and most of the dogmatists, have confessed that it was a thing they did not understand; and after all this enumeration of opinions,

> "Harum sententiarum quæ vera sit, Deus aliquis viderit":

says Cicero[2]; I know, by myself, says St. Bernard,[3] how incomprehensible God is, seeing I cannot comprehend the parts of my own being. Heraclitus,[4] who was of opinion that every place was full of souls and demons, nevertheless maintained that no one could advance so far towards the knowledge of the soul as ever to arrive at it, so profound was its essence.

Neither is there less controversy and debate about locating it. Hippocrates and Hierophilus place it in the ventricle of the brain[5]; Democritus and Aristotle throughout the whole body[6]:

> "Ut bona sæpe valetudo quum dicitur esse
> Corporis, et non est tamen hæc pars ulla valentis"[7]:

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[1] "That there is a certain vital habit which the Greeks call a harmony."—Lucretius, iii. 100.

[2] "Of these opinions, which is the true, let some God determine."—*Tusc.*, i. 11.

[3] *De Animâ*, c. 1.

[4] Diogenes Laertius, *in Vitâ.*

[5] Plutarch, *De Placitis Philosophorum*, lib. iv., cap. 5.

[6] Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Mathem.*, p. 201.

[7] "As when good health is often said to be a part of the body, whereas of a healthy man 'tis no part."—Lucretius, iii. 103.

Epicurus, in the stomach ;

> "Hic exsultat enim pavor ac metus ; hæc loca circum
> Lætitiæ mulcent"[1] ;

the Stoics, about and within the heart ; Erasistratus, adjoining the membrane of the epicranion : Empedocles, in the blood, as also Moses,[2] which was the reason why he interdicted eating the blood of beasts, because the soul is there seated : Strato[3] placed it betwixt the eyebrows :—

> "Quâ facie quidem sit animus, aut ubi habitet, ne quærendum quidem est"[4] :

says Cicero. I very willingly deliver this author to you in his own words : for why spoil the language of eloquence ? besides that it were no great prize to steal the matter of his inventions ; they are neither very frequent, nor of any great weight, and sufficiently known. But the reason why Chrysippus argues it to be about the heart, as all the rest of that sect do, is not to be omitted. "It is," says he,[5] "because when we would affirm anything, we lay our hand upon our breasts ; and when we will pronounce ἐγὼ, which signifies *I*, we let the lower mandible sink towards the stomach." This place ought not to be over-slipt without a remark upon the futility of so great a man ; for besides that these considerations are infinitely light in themselves, the last is only a proof to the Greeks that they have

[1] "This is the seat of terror and fear ; here is the place where joys exist."—Lucretius, iii. 142.

[2] *Genesis*, iv. ; *Leviticus*, vii. 26.

[3] *De Placitis Philoso.*, iv. 5.

[4] "What figure the soul is of, or what part it inhabits, is not to be inquired into."—Cicero, *Tuscul.*, i. 28. Inquiry was thus deprecated by the ancients by reason of its futility ; the modern Church deprecates it on other grounds.

[5] Galien, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, ii. 2.

their souls lodged in that part: no human judgment is so vigilant that it does not sometime sleep. Why should we be afraid to speak? We see the Stoics,[1] fathers of human prudence, have found out that the soul of a man crushed under a ruin, long labours and strives to get out, like a mouse caught in a trap, before it can disengage itself from the burden. Some hold that the world was made to give bodies, by way of punishment, to the spirits, fallen by their own fault, from the purity wherein they had been created, the first creation having been no other than incorporeal; and that according as they are more or less remote from their spirituality, so are they more or less lightly or heavily incorporated, and that thence proceeds the variety of so much created matter. But the spirit that, for his punishment, was invested with the body of the sun, must certainly have a very rare and particular measure of thirst.

The extremities of our perquisition all fall into and terminate in a misty astonishment, as Plutarch says,[2] of the testimony of histories, that as in charts and maps the utmost bounds of known countries are filled up with marshes, impenetrable forests, deserts, and uninhabitable places; and this is the reason why the most gross and childish ravings are most found in those authors who treat of the most elevated subjects, and proceed the furthest in them, losing themselves in their own curiosity and presumption. The beginning and the end of knowledge are equally foolish: observe to what a pitch Plato flies in his poetic clouds; take notice there of the jargon of the gods; but what did he dream of when he defined man to be a two-legged animal, without feathers[3]: giving those who had a mind to deride

[1] Seneca, *Ep.*, 57. [2] *Life of Theseus.*
[3] Diogenes Laertius, *in Vitâ*, 40.

him, a pleasant occasion; for, having pulled off the feathers of a live capon, they went about calling it the Man of Plato.

And what of the Epicureans? out of what simplicity did they first imagine that their atoms, which they said were bodies having some weight and a natural motion downward, had made the world: till they were put in mind by their adversaries that, according to this description, it was impossible they should unite and join to one another, their fall being so direct and perpendicular, and producing parallel lines throughout? wherefore they were fain thereafter to add a fortuitous and lateral motion, and, moreover, to furnish their atoms with hooked tails, by which they might unite and cling to one another; and even then do not those who attack them upon this second invention put them hardly to it? "If the atoms have by chance formed so many sorts of figures, why did it never fall out that they made a house or a shoe? why, at the same rate, should we not believe that an infinite number of Greek letters, strewn all over a place, might fall into the contexture of the Iliad?"[1]

"Whatever is capable of reason," says Zeno,[2] "is better than that which is not capable: there is nothing better than the world: the world is therefore capable of reason." Cotta,[3] by this same argumentation, makes the world a mathematician; and 'tis also made a musician and an organist by this other argumentation of Zeno: "The whole is more than a part; we are capable of wisdom, and are part of the world: therefore the world is wise." There are infinite like examples, not merely of arguments that are false in themselves, but silly; that do

[1] Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, ii. 57.
[2] Idem, *ibid.*, ii. 37.
[3] Idem, *ibid.*, iii. 9.

not hold together, and that accuse their authors not so much of ignorance as of imprudence, in the reproaches the philosophers throw in one another's teeth upon the dissensions in their opinions and sects.

Whoever should accumulate a sufficient fardle of the fooleries of human wisdom, might tell wonders. I willingly muster these few as patterns in their way not less profitable than more moderate instructions. Let us judge by these what opinion we are to have of man, of his sense and reason, when in these great persons, who have raised human knowledge so high, so many gross and manifest errors and defects are to be found!

For my part, I would rather believe that they have treated of knowledge casually, and as a toy with both hands, and have contended about reason as of a vain and frivolous instrument, setting on foot all sorts of inventions and fancies, sometimes more sinewy, and sometimes weaker. This same Plato, who defines man as if he were a fowl, says elsewhere,[1] after Socrates, "that he does not, in truth, know what man is, and that he is a member of the world the hardest to understand." By this variety and instability of opinions, they tacitly lead us as it were by the hand to this resolution of their irresolution. They profess not always to deliver their opinions barefaced and apparent: they have one while disguised them in the fabulous shadows of poesy, and another while under some other mask: our imperfection carries this along with it, that raw meat is not always proper for our stomachs; we must dry, alter, and mix it. These men do the same; they often conceal their real opinions and judgments, and falsify them to accommodate themselves to the public use. They will

[1] In the first *Alcibiades*.

not make an open profession of ignorance and of the imbecility of human reason, that they may not frighten children; but they sufficiently discover it to us under the appearance of a troubled and inconstant science.

I advised a person in Italy, who had a great mind to speak Italian,[1] that provided he only had a desire to make himself understood, without being ambitious otherwise to excel, that he should simply make use of the first words that came to the tongue's end, Latin, French, Spanish or Gascon, and then by adding the Italian termination, he could not fail of hitting upon some idiom of the country, either Tuscan, Roman, Venetian, Piedmontese, or Neapolitan, and to apply himself to some one of those many forms: I say the same of philosophy: she has so many faces, so much variety, and has said so many things, that all our dreams and fantasies are there to be found; human imagination can conceive nothing good or bad that is not there:—

"Nihil tam absurdè dici potest, quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum."[2]

And I am the more willing to expose my own whimsies to the public, forasmuch as though they are spun out of myself and without any pattern, I know they will be found related to some ancient humour, and there will be no want of some one to say, "That's whence he took it." My manners are natural; I have not called in the assistance of any discipline to frame them: but weak as they

[1] Montaigne, at all events, desired to improve himself in this way, so far as to dictate his *Journal*, while he was in Italy, in the language of the country.

[2] "Nothing can be so absurdly said, that is not said by some of the philosophers."—Cicero, *De Divin.*, ii. 58.

are, when it came into my head to lay them open to the world's view, and that, to expose them to the light in a little more decent garb, I went about to help them with reasons and examples: it was a wonder to myself incidentally to find them conformable to so many philosophical discourses and examples. I learned not what was my rule of life, till it was worn out and spent: a new figure, an unpremeditate and accidental philosopher.

But to return to our soul; that Plato[1] has placed reason in the brain, anger in the heart, and concupiscence in the liver, 'tis likely that it was rather an interpretation of the movements of the soul than that he intended a division and separation of it, as of a body, into several members. And the most likely of their opinions is, that 'tis always a soul, that, by its faculty, reasons, remembers, comprehends, judges, desires, and exercises all its other operations by divers instruments of the body: as the pilot guides his ship according to his experience of it; now tightening, now slacking the cordage, one while hoisting the mainyard or moving the rudder, by one and the same power carrying on so many several effects: and that it is lodged in the brain, which appears from this that the wounds and accidents which touch that part immediately offend the faculties of the soul; and 'tis not incongruous that it should thence diffuse itself into the other parts of the body:—

"Medium non deserit unquam
Cœli Phœbus iter; radiis tamen omnia lustrat"[2];

[1] Second part of the *Timæus*; and see Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato*.

[2] "Phœbus never deviates from his central way, yet enlightens all things with his rays."—Claudius, *De Sexto Consul. Hon.*, v. 411.

as the sun sheds from heaven its light and influence, and fills the world with them:—

> "Cætera pars animæ, per totum dissita corpus,
> Paret, et ad numen mentis nomenque movetur."[1]

Some have said, that there was a general soul, as it were a great body, from which all the particular souls were extracted, and thither again returned, always restoring themselves to that universal matter:—

> "Deum namque ire per omnes
> Terrasque, tractusque maris, cœlumque profundum:
> Hinc pecudes, armenta, viros, genus omne ferarum,
> Quemque sibi tenues nascentem arcessere vitas:
> Scilicet huc reddi deinde, ac resoluta referri
> Omnia: nec morti esse locum"[2]:

others, that they only rejoined and reunited themselves to it; others, that they were produced from the divine substance; others, by the angels of fire and air: others, that they were from all antiquity; some, that they were created at the very point of time the bodies wanted them; others made them descend from the orb of the moon, and return thither; the generality of the ancients, that they were begotten from father to son, after a like manner and production with all other natural things; raising their argument from the likeness of children to their fathers;

> "Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis"[3];

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[1] "The other part of the soul, diffused all over the body, obeys the divinity and great name of the mind."—Lucretius, iii. 144.

[2] "They believe that God circulates through all the earth, sea, and high heavens; hence cattle, men, flocks, every kind of wild animals, draw the breath of life, and thither return when the body is dissolved: nor is there any death."—Virgil, *Geor.*, iv. 221.

[3] "The strong spring from the strong and good."—Hor., *Od.*, iv. 4, 29.

and that we see descend from fathers to their children, not only bodily marks, but moreover a resemblance of humours, complexions, and inclinations of the soul:—

> "Denique cur acris violentia triste leonum
> Seminium sequitur? vulpeis dolus, et fuga cervis
> A patribus datur, et patrius pavor incitat artus?
> . . . . . .
> Si non, certa suo quia semine seminioque,
> Vis animi pariter crescit cum corpore quoque?"[1]

that thereupon the Divine justice is grounded, punishing in the children the faults of their fathers: forasmuch as the contagion of paternal vices is in some sort imprinted in the soul of children, and that the disorders of their will extend to them[2]: moreover, that if souls had any other derivation than a natural consequence, and that they had been some other thing out of the body, they would retain some memory of their first being, the natural faculties that are proper to them of discoursing, reasoning, and remembering being considered:—

> "——et in corpus nascentibus insinuatur,
> Cur super anteactam ætatem meminisse nequimus;
> Nec vestigia gestarum rerum ulla tenemus?"[3]

for to make the condition of our souls such as we would have it to be, we must presuppose them all-knowing, when in their natural simplicity and purity; and, this being so, they had been such, while free from the prison of the body, as well before they

[1] "For why should ferocity ever spring from the fierce lion's seed? why craft from the fox? why fear from the stag? Why should his readiness to fly descend to him from his father? . . . but that the soul has germs like the body, and still increases as the body increases."—Lucretius, iii. 741, 746.

[2] Plutarch, *Why the Divine Justice, &c.*

[3] "If it be infused in our bodies at our birth, why do we retain no memory of our preceding life, and why not remember anything we did before?"—Lucretius, iii. 671.

entered into it, as we hope they shall be after they are gone out of it: and this former knowledge, it should follow, they should remember being yet in the body, as Plato said,[1] "That what we learn is no other than a remembrance of what we knew before"; a thing which every one by experience may maintain to be false; forasmuch in the first place, as we remember what we have been taught: and as, if the memory purely performed its office, it would at least suggest to us something more than what we have been taught; secondly, that which she knew, being in her purity, was a true knowledge, knowing things, as they are, by her divine intelligence: whereas here we make her receive falsehood and vice, when we tell her of these, and herein she cannot employ her reminiscence, that image and conception having never been planted in her. To say that the corporeal presence so suffocates her natural faculties that they are there utterly extinguished, is, first, contrary to this other belief of acknowledging her power to be so great, and those operations of it that men sensibly perceive in this life to be so admirable, as to have thereby concluded this divinity and past eternity, and the immortality to come:—

> "Nam si tantopere est animi mutata potestas,
> Omnis ut actarum exciderit retinentia rerum,
> Non, ut opinor, ea ab letho jam longiter errat."[2]

Furthermore 'tis here with us, and not elsewhere, that the powers and effects of the soul ought to be considered: all the rest of her perfections are vain and useless to her; 'tis by her present condition that

[1] In the *Phædo*.

[2] "For if the mind is so changed that it has lost all memory of past things, this, I confess, appears to me not far from death."—Lucretius, iii. 674.

all her immortality is to be rewarded and paid, and of the life of man only that she is to render an account. It had been injustice to have stripped her of her means and power; to have disarmed her, in order in the time of her captivity and imprisonment, of her weakness and infirmity, in the time wherein she is under force and constraint, to pass my sentence and condemnation of infinite and perpetual duration; and insist, upon the consideration of so short a time, peradventure a life of but an hour or two, or at the most but of a century, which have no more proportion to infinity than an instant: from this momentary interval, to ordain and definitely determine her whole being: it were an unreasonable disproportion to acquire an eternal recompense in return for so short a life. Plato,[1] to save himself from this inconvenience, will have future rewards limited to the term of a hundred years, relatively to human duration; and among ourselves several have given them temporal limits: by this they judged that the generation of the soul followed the common condition of human things, as also her life, according to the opinion of Epicurus and Democritus, which has been the most received, pursuant to these fine notions: that we see it born as soon as the body is capable of it; that we see it increase in vigour as the corporeal vigour increases; that its feebleness in infancy is very manifest, then its better form and maturity, and finally, its declensions in old age, and its decrepitude:—

> "Gigni pariter cum corpore, et unâ
> Crescere sentimus, pariterque senescere mentem"[2]:

[1] *Republic*, x.

[2] "We see that the mind is born with the body, with it increases, and with it decays."—Lucretius, iii. 446.

they perceived it to be capable of divers passions, and agitated with several painful motions, whence it fell into lassitude and uneasiness; capable of alteration and change, of cheerfulness, of dulness, of faintness; subject to diseases and injuries of its own, as the stomach or the foot:—

> "Mentem sanari, corpus ut ægrum,
> Cernimus, et flecti medicinâ posse videmus"[1]:

dazzled and intoxicated with the fumes of wine; jostled from her seat by the vapours of a burning fever; laid asleep by the application of some medicaments, and roused by others:—

> "Corpoream naturam animi esse necesse est,
> Corporeis quoniam telis ictuque laborat"[2]:

they saw it astounded and all its faculties overthrown by the mere bite of a mad dog, and, in that condition, to have no such stability of reason, no such sufficiency, no such virtue, no philosophical resolution, no such resistance as could exempt it from the subjection of these accidents; the slaver of a contemptible cur, shed upon the hand of Socrates, to shake all his wisdom and all his so great and well-regulated imaginations, and so to annihilate them as that there remained no trace or footstep of his former knowledge:—

> "Vis . . . animai
> Conturbatur, et . . . divisa seorsum
> Disjectatur, eodem illo distracta veneno"[3]:

and this poison to find no more resistance in this great soul than in that of an infant of four years

[1] "We see sick minds cured as well as sick bodies by the help of medicines."—Lucretius, iii. 509.

[2] "The soul must, of necessity, be corporeal, for we see it suffer from wounds and blows."—Idem, *ibid.*, 498.

[3] "The power of the soul is disturbed, overthrown, and distracted by the same poison."—Idem, *ibid.*, 498.

old: a poison sufficient to make all philosophy, if it were incarnate, furious and mad; insomuch that Cato, so stiff-necked against death and fortune, could not endure the sight of a looking-glass or of water, confounded with horror and affright at the danger of falling, by the contagion of a mad dog, into the disease called by physicians hydrophobia:—

> "Vis morbi distracta per artus
> Turbat agens animam, spumantes æquore salso
> Ventorum ut validis fervescunt viribus undæ."[1]

Now, as to this particular, philosophy has sufficiently armed man to encounter all other accidents, either with patience, or if the search of that costs too dear, by an infallible defeat, in totally depriving himself of all sentiment: but these are expedients, that are only of use to a soul being itself and in its full power, capable of reason and deliberation: but not at all proper for this inconvenience, where even in a philosopher, the soul becomes the soul of a madman, troubled, overturned, and lost: which many occasions may produce, as a too vehement agitation that any violent passion of the soul may beget in itself, or a wound in a certain part of the person, or vapours from the stomach, any of which may stupefy the understanding and turn the brain:—

> "Morbis in corporis avius errat
> Sæpe animus; dementit enim, deliraque fatur;
> Interdumque gravi lethargo fertur in altum
> Æternumque soporem, oculis nutuque cadenti."[2]

[1] "The violence of the disease diffused throughout the limbs, disturbs the soul, as in the salt sea the foaming waves rage with the force of the strong winds."—Lucretius, iii. 491.

[2] "In the ailments of the body the mind often wanders, grows disordered and wild, and sometimes by a heavy lethargy is cast into a profound and everlasting sleep; the eyes close, the head sinks."—Idem, *ibid.*, 464.

The philosophers, methinks, have scarcely touched this string, no more than another of the same importance; they have this dilemma continually in their mouths to console our mortal condition: "The soul is either mortal or immortal; if mortal, it will suffer no pain; if immortal, it will change for the better." They never touch the other branch: "What if she change for the worse?" And they leave to the poets the menaces of future torments; but thereby they make for themselves a good game. These are two omissions that I often meet with in their discourses: I return to the first.

This soul loses the use of the sovereign stoical good, so constant and so firm: our fine human wisdom must here yield and give up its arms. As to the rest, they also considered, by the vanity of human reason, that the mixture and association of two so contrary things as the mortal and the immortal, is unimaginable:—

> "Quippe etenim mortale æterno jungere, et una
> Consentire putare, et fungi mutua posse,
> Desipere est. Quid enim diversius esse putandum est,
> Aut magîs inter se disjunctum discrepitansque,
> Quam, mortale quod est, immortali atque perenni,
> Junctum, in concilio sævas tolerare procellas?"[1]

Moreover, they perceived the soul declining in death, as well as the body:—

> "Simul ævo fessa fatiscit"[2]:

which, according to Zeno, the image of sleep sufficiently demonstrates to us; for he looks upon

[1] "For to join the mortal and the eternal, and think they can agree and discharge mutual functions, is folly. For what things are more differing or more distinct betwixt themselves, and more opposed, than the mortal and the immortal and enduring joined together in order to undergo cruel storms?"—Lucretius, iii. 801.

[2] "It yields up the body to old age."—Idem, *ibid.*, 459.

it as a fainting and fall of the soul, as well as of the body:—

"Contrahi animum et quasi labi putat atque decidere."[1]

And what they perceived in some, that the soul maintained its force and vigour to the last gasp of life, they attributed to the variety of diseases; as it is observable in men at the last extremity, that some retain one sense and some another; one the hearing, and another the smell, without any alteration; and that there is no so universal a deprivation, that some parts do not remain entire and vigorous:—

"Non alio pacto, quam si, pes cum dolet ægri,
In nullo caput interea sit forte dolore."[2]

The sight of our judgment has the same relation to truth that the owl's eyes have to the splendour of the sun, says Aristotle.[3] By what can we better convict it than by so gross blindness in so apparent a light? For as to the contrary opinion of the immortality of the soul, which Cicero says was first introduced, at all events by the testimony of books, by Pherecides Syrius[4] in the time of King Tullius, though others attribute it to Thales, and others to others, 'tis the part of human science that is treated of with the most doubt and the greatest reservation. The most positive dogmatists are, on this point, principally constrained to fly to the refuge of the Academy. No one knows what Aristotle has established upon this subject, any more than all

[1] "He thinks the mind is contracted, and that it slips and falls."—Cicero, *De Divin.*, ii. 58.

[2] "Not otherwise than if, when a sick man's foot may be in pain, yet his head be free from any suffering."—Lucretius, iii. 111.

[3] *Metaphysics*, ii. 1. [4] Of Syros. Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, i. 16.

the ancients in general, who handle it with a wavering belief:—

"Rem gratissimam promittentium magis, quam probantium"[1];

he conceals himself in clouds of words and difficult and unintelligible fancies, and has left to his sect as great a dispute about his judgment as about the matter itself.

Two things rendered this opinion plausible to them: one, that without the immortality of souls there would be nothing whereon to ground the vain hopes of glory, which is a consideration of wonderful repute in the world; the other, that it is a very profitable impression, as Plato says,[2] that vices, though they escape the discovery and cognisance of human justice, are still within the reach of the divine, which will pursue them even after the death of the guilty. Man is excessively solicitous to prolong his being, and has, to the utmost of his power, provided for it; monuments are erected for the conservation of the body, and from glory to transmit the name; impatient of his fortune, he has employed all his wit and opinion in the rebuilding of himself, and in the sustenance of himself by his productions. The soul, by reason of its anxiety and impotence, being unable to stand by itself, wanders up and down to seek support in consolations, hopes, and other external circumstances, to which she adheres and fixes; and how light or fantastic soever invention pronounces them to it, relies more willingly and with greater assurance upon them, than upon itself. But 'tis wonderful to observe how short the most constant and firm maintainers of this just and clear persuasion

[1] "A thing more satisfactory in the promise than in the proof."—Seneca, *Ep.*, 102.

[2] *Laws*, x. 13:

of the immortality of the soul fall, and how weak their arguments are, when they go about to prove it by human reason :—

"Somnia sunt non docentis, sed optantis,"[1]

says one of the ancients. By which testimony man may know that he owes the truth he himself finds out to fortune and accident ; since, even when it is fallen into his hand, he has not wherewith to hold and maintain it, and that his reason has not force to make use of it. All things produced by our own reasoning and understanding, whether true or false, are subject to incertitude and controversy. 'Twas for the chastisement of our pride, and for the instruction of our misery and incapacity, that God wrought the perplexity and confusion of the old tower of Babel. Whatever we undertake without His assistance, whatever we see without the lamp of His grace, is but vanity and folly ; we corrupt and debase by our weakness the very essence of truth, which is uniform and constant, when fortune puts it into our possession. What course soever man takes of himself, God still permits it to come to the same confusion, the image whereof He so vividly represents to us in the just chastisement wherewith He crushed Nimrod's presumption, and frustrated the vain attempt of his pyramid :—

"Perdam sapientiam sapientūm, et prudentiam prudentūm reprobabo."[2]

The diversity of idioms and languages with which He disturbed this work, what are they other than this infinite and perpetual altercation and discord-

[1] "They are dreams, not of the teacher, but of the wisher."—Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 38.

[2] "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."—St. Paul, 1 *Cor.* i. 19.

ance of opinions and reasons, which accompany and confound the vain building of human wisdom, and to very good effect? For what would hold us if we had but the least grain of knowledge? This saint has very much obliged me :—

"Ipsa veritatis occultatio aut humilitatis exercitatio est aut elationis attritio."[1]

To what a pitch of presumption and insolence do we raise our blindness and folly!

But to return to my subject: it was truly very good reason that we should be beholden to God only, and to the favour of His grace, for the truth of so noble a belief, since from His sole bounty we receive the fruit of immortality, which consists in the enjoyment of eternal beatitude. Let us ingeniously confess that God alone has dictated it to us, and faith; for 'tis no lesson of nature and our own reason: and whoever will inquire into his own being and power, both within and without, otherwise than by this divine privilege: whoever shall consider man impartially and without flattery, will see nothing in him of efficacy or faculty that relishes of anything but death and earth. The more we give, and confess to owe and render to God, we do it with the greater Christianity. That which this Stoic philosopher says he holds from the fortuitous consent of the popular voice, had it not been better had he held it from God?—

"Cum de animorum æternitate disserimus, non leve momentum apud nos habet consensus hominum aut timentium inferos aut colentium. Utor hâc publicâ persuasione."[2]

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[1] "The very obscurity of the truth is either an exercise of humility or a crushing of pride."—St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, xi. 22.

[2] "When we discourse of the immortality of minds, the consent of men that either fear or adore the infernal powers is of no small moment. I make use of this public persuasion."—Seneca, *Epist.*, 117.

Now, the weakness of human arguments upon this subject is particularly manifested by the fabulous circumstances they have superadded as consequences of this opinion, to find out of what condition this immortality of ours was. Let us omit the Stoics :—

"Usuram nobis largiuntur tanquam cornicibus : diu mansuros aiunt animos ; semper, negant"[1] :

who gives to soul a life after this, but finite. The most universal and received fancy, and which continues down to our times in various places, is that of which they make Pythagoras the author : not that he was the original inventor, but because it received a great deal of weight and repute by the authority of his approbation ; and this is, that souls at their departure out of us do nothing but shift from one body to another, from a lion to a horse, from a horse to a king, continually travelling at this rate from habitation to habitation. And he himself said that he remembered to have been Æthalides, since that Euphorbus, and afterwards Hermotimus, and finally from Pyrrhus was passed into Pythagoras, having a memory of himself of two hundred and six years.[2] Some have added that these very souls at times remount to heaven and come down again :—

"O pater, anne aliquas ad cœlum hinc ire putandum est
Sublimes animas, iterumque ad tarda reverti
Corpora ? quæ lucis miseris tam dira cupido."[3]

[1] "They give us the enjoyment [of life], as they do to crows ; they say that minds shall continue long, that they shall continue always they deny."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, i. 31.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, *in Vitâ.*

[3] "O father, is it to be believed that some sublime souls should hence mount to heaven and thence return to lumpish bodies ? what is the so dire affection for life in wretched [men ?]."—Virgil, *Æneid*, vi. 719.

Origen makes them eternally to go and come, from a better to a worse estate. The opinion that Varro [1] makes mention of is, that after four hundred and forty years' revolution they are reunited to their first bodies; Chrysippus held that this would happen after a certain space of time unknown and unlimited. Plato,[2] who professes to have derived from Pindar and the ancient poets the belief that souls are to undergo infinite vicissitudes of mutation, for which the soul is prepared, having neither punishment nor reward in the other world, but what is temporal, as its life here is but temporal, concludes that it has a singular knowledge of the affairs of heaven, of hell, of the world, through all which it has passed, repassed, and made stay in several voyages; fit matters for her memory. Observe her progress elsewhere[3]: "he who has lived well is reunited to the star to which he is assigned: he who has lived ill removes into a woman, and, if he do not there reform, is again removed into a beast of condition suitable to his vicious manners, and will see no end of his punishments till he return to his natural constitution, and has by the force of reason purged himself from the gross, stupid, and elementary qualities he was polluted with." But I will not forget the objection the Epicureans make against this transmigration from one body to another; 'tis a pleasant one: they ask, "What expedient would be found out if the number of dying should chance to be greater than that of those who are coming into the world? for the souls turned out of their old habitation would scuffle and crowd which should first get

[1] Cited by St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, xxii. 28.
[2] In the *Menon*.
[3] Plato in the *Timæus*.

possession of this new lodging." And they further demand, "how they should pass away their time whilst waiting till a new quarter were made ready for them: or, on the contrary, if more animals should be born than die, the bodies, they say, would be but in an ill condition whilst awaiting a soul to be infused into them; and it would fall out that some bodies would die before they had been alive:—

> "Denique connubia ad Veneris partusque ferarum
> Esse animas præsto, deridiculum esse videtur;
> Exspectare immortales mortalia membra
> Innumero numero, certareque præproperanter
> Inter se, quæ prima potissimaque insinuetur"[1]:

Others have arrested the soul in the body of the deceased, with it to animate serpents, worms, and other beasts which are said to be bred out of the corruption of our limbs, and even out of our ashes; others divide it into two parts, the one mortal, the other immortal; others make it corporeal, and nevertheless immortal; some make it immortal without science or knowledge. And some have believed that devils were made of the souls of the damned, and this has been the fancy of some among ourselves, as Plutarch thinks that gods are made of those that are saved; for there are few things which that author is so positive in as he is in this; ever maintaining, elsewhere, a doubtful and ambiguous way of expression. "We are to hold," says he,[2] "and steadfastly to believe, that the souls of virtuous men, both according to nature and to the divine justice, become saints, and from saints demi-gods, and from demi-gods, after they

[1] "In fine, it seems ridiculous that souls should be always awaiting the coupling and birth of animals, and that immortals should in vast numbers crowd about mortal germs, and strive and contend with eagerness which should first possess them."—Lucretius, iii. 777.

[2] *Life of Romulus.*

are perfectly, as in sacrifices of purgation, cleansed and purified, being delivered from all passibility and all mortality, they become, not by any civil decree but in real truth, and according to all probability of reason, entire and perfect gods, receiving a most happy and glorious end." But who desires to see him, he who is the most sober and moderate of the whole tribe, lay about him with greater boldness, and relate his miracles upon this subject, I refer him to his Treatise of the Moon, and his *Dæmon* of Socrates, where he may, as evidently as in any other place whatever, satisfy himself that the mysteries of philosophy have many strange things in common with those of poesy; the human understanding losing itself in attempting to sound and search all things to the bottom, just as we, tired and worn out with a long course of life, relapse into infancy. Such are the fine and certain instructions which we extract from human knowledge concerning the soul.

There is not less temerity in what it teaches us touching the corporeal parts. Let us choose one or two examples, for otherwise we should lose ourselves in this vast and troubled ocean of medicinal errors. Let us see whether, at least, they agree about the matter whereof men produce one another; for as to their first production it is no wonder, if in a thing so high and so long since past, human understanding finds itself perplexed and dissipated. Archelaus the naturalist, whose disciple and favourite Socrates was, according to Aristoxenus, said,[1] that both men and beasts were made of a lacteous slime, expressed by the heat of the earth: Pythagoras says,[2] that our seed is the foam of our better blood:

[1] Diogenes Laertius, ii. 17.
[2] Plutarch, *Opinions of the Philosophers*, v. 3.

Plato,[1] that it is the distillation of the marrow of the backbone, which he argues from the circumstance that that part is first sensible of being weary of the work: Alcmeon,[2] that it is part of the substance of the brain, and this is shown, says he, inasmuch as it causes weakness of the eyes in those who immoderately labour in that exercise: Democritus,[3] that it is a substance extracted from the whole mass of the body: Epicurus,[4] that it is extracted from soul and body: Aristotle, an excrement drawn from the aliment of the blood, the last which is diffused through our members: others, that it is blood concocted and digested by the heat of the genitories, which they judge by reason that in excessive endeavours a man voids pure blood; wherein there seems to be the most likelihood, could a man extract any probability from so infinite a confusion. Now, to bring this seed to do its work, how many contrary opinions are set on foot. Aristotle and Democritus are of opinion[5] that women have no sperm, and that 'tis nothing but a sweat that they distil in the heat of pleasure and motion, and that contributes nothing at all to generation: Galen, on the contrary, and his followers believe that without the fusion of seeds there can be no generation. Here, again, are the physicians, the philosophers, the lawyers, and the divines by the ears with our wives about the dispute, for what time women carry their fruit; and I, for my part, by the example of myself,[6] side with those who maintain that a woman goes eleven months with child. The world is built upon this

[1] Plutarch, *Opinions of the Philosophers*, v. 3. [2] Idem, *ibid.*
[3] Idem, *ibid.* [4] Idem, *ibid.*
[5] Plutarch (*ubi suprâ*) adds Zeno to Aristotle, and says expressly that Democritus believed that the females shed their seed.
[6] The Essayist was an eleven months' child.

experience; there is not so simple a little woman that cannot give her judgment in all these controversies, and yet we cannot agree.

Here is enough to verify that man is no better instructed in the knowledge of himself in his corporeal than in his spiritual part. We have proposed himself to himself, and his reason to his reason, to see what she could say. I think I have sufficiently demonstrated how little she understands herself in herself; and who understands not himself in himself, in what can he possibly understand?—

"Quasi vero mensuram ullius rei possit agere, qui sui nescait."[1]

Truly, Protagoras told us a pretty flam,[2] in making man the measure of all things who never knew so much as his own; if it be not he, his dignity will not permit that any other creature should have this advantage; now, he being so contrary in himself, and one judgment so incessantly subverting another, this favourable proposition was but a mockery, which led us necessarily to conclude the nullity of the compass and the compasser. When Thales[3] reputes the knowledge of man very difficult for man, he, at the same time, gives him to understand, that all other knowledge is impossible to him.

You, for whom I have taken the pains, contrary to my custom, to write so long a discourse, will not refuse to maintain your Sebonde by the ordinary forms of arguing wherein you are every day instructed, and in this will exercise your study. For this last fencing trick is never to be made use of but as an extreme remedy; 'tis a desperate

[1] "As if he could understand the measure of anything that knows not his own."—Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, ii. 1.
[2] Apud Sextus Empiricus, *Advers. Mathem.*, p. 148.
[3] Diogenes Laertius, *in Vitâ.*

thrust, wherein you are to quit your own arms to make your adversary abandon his; and a secret sleight, which must be very rarely and very reservedly put in practice. 'Tis great temerity to lose yourself, that you may destroy another; you must not die to be revenged, as Gobrias did; for, hotly grappling in combat with a Persian lord, Darius coming in, sword in hand, and fearing to strike lest he should kill Gobrias, he called out to him boldly to fall on, though he should run them both through at once.[1] I have known weapons and conditions of single combat, without quarter, and wherein he who proposed them, put himself and his adversary upon terms of inevitable death to them both, censured as unjust. The Portuguese, in the Indian Sea, took certain Turks prisoners, who, impatient of their captivity, resolved (and it succeeded), by striking some ship nails against one another and making a spark fall into the barrels of powder that were in the place where they were confined, to blow up and reduce themselves, their masters, and the vessel to ashes. We touch here the utmost limits of the sciences, whose extremity is vicious, as in virtue. Keep yourselves in the common road; it is not good to be so subtle and cunning. Remember the Tuscan proverb:—

"Chi troppo s'assottiglia, si scavezza."[2]

I advise you, in all your opinions and meditations, as well as in your manners and all other things, to keep yourself moderate and reserved, and to avoid all novelty and strangeness: I am an enemy of all out-of-the-way proceedings. You who by the

[1] Herodotus, iii. 78.

[2] "If you draw your thread too fine, it will break."—Petrarca, *Canz.*, xi. 48.

authority of your greatness, and yet more by the advantages which those qualities give you that are more your own, may, with the twinkle of an eye command whom you please, should give this charge to some professor of letters, who might, after a much better manner, have sustained and illustrated these things to you. But here is as much as you will stand in need of.

Epicurus said of the laws, that the worst were so necessary for us, that without them men would devour one another; and Plato affirms, that without laws we should live like beasts. Our mind is a wandering, dangerous, and temerarious tool; it is hard to couple any order or measure to it; and in my time, those who are endued with some rare excellence above others, or any extraordinary vivacity of understanding, we see almost all of them lash out into licence of opinions and manners; 'tis almost a miracle to find one temperate and socially tractable. There's all the reason in the world to limit the human mind within the strictest limits possible: in study, as in all the rest, we ought to have its steps and advances numbered and fixed, and that the limits of its inquisition be bounded by art. It is curbed and fettered by religions, laws, customs, sciences, precepts, mortal and immortal penalties and rewards; and yet we see that by its volubility and dissolvability it escapes from all these bounds; 'tis a vain body which has nothing to lay hold on; or to seize a various and difform body, incapable of being either bound or held. Truly, there are few souls so regular, firm, and well descended that are to be trusted with their own conduct, and that can, with moderation and without temerity, sail in the liberty of their own judgments beyond the common and received

opinions: 'tis more expedient to put them under pupilage. The mind is a dangerous weapon, even to the possessor, if he knows not discreetly how to use it; and there is not a beast to whom a head-board can more properly be given to keep his looks down and before his feet, and to hinder him from wandering here and there out of the tracks which custom and the laws have laid before him: therefore it will be much better for you to keep yourself in the beaten path, let it be what it will, than to fly out at a venture with this unbridled liberty. If any of these new doctors should seek to exercise his ingenuity in your presence, at the expense both of your soul and his own, to avoid this dangerous plague, which is every day laid in your way, this preservative, in extremist necessity, will prevent the contagion of this poison from offending either you or your company.

The liberty, then, and frolic forwardness of these ancient wits, produced in philosophy and human sciences, several sects of different opinions, each undertaking to judge and make choice of what he would stick to and maintain. But now that men go all one way,

"Qui certis quibusdam destinatisque sententiis addicti et consecrati sunt, ut etiam, quæ non probant, cogantur defendere,"[1]

and that we receive the arts by civil authority and decree, so that the schools have but one pattern and a like circumscribed institution and discipline, we no longer take notice what the coin weighs and is really worth, but every one receives it according to the estimate that the common approbation and

[1] "Who are so tied and obliged to certain beliefs, that they are bound to defend even those they do not approve."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, ii. 2.

the ordinary course put upon it: the alloy is not disputed, but for how much it is current. In like manner, all things pass; we take physic as we do geometry, and tricks of hocus-pocus, enchantments, codpiece points, correspondence with the souls of the dead, prognostications, domifications,[1] and even that ridiculous pursuit of the philosopher's stone, all things pass for current pay, without scruple or contradiction. We need to know no more but that Mars' house is in the middle of the triangle of the hand, that of Venus in the thumb, and that of Mercury in the little finger; that when the table-line cuts the tubercle of the forefinger, 'tis a sign of cruelty; that when it falls short of the middle finger, and that the natural medium line makes an angle with the vital in the same side, 'tis the sign of a miserable death; that if, in a woman, the natural line be open, and does not close the angle with the vital, this denotes that she will not be very chaste; I leave you to judge whether a man, thus qualified, may not pass with reputation and esteem in all companies.

Theophrastus said that human knowledge, guided by the senses, might judge of the causes of things to a certain degree: but that being arrived at extreme and first causes, it must stop short, and retire, by reason either of its own infirmity, or the difficulty of things. 'Tis a moderate and gentle opinion, that our own understanding may conduct us to the knowledge of some things, and that it has certain measures of power, beyond which 'tis temerity to employ it; this opinion is plausible, and introduced by men of well-composed minds. But 'tis hard to limit our mind; 'tis inquisitive and greedy, and will

[1] The dividing of the heavens into twelve squares or houses for astrological purposes.

no more stop at a thousand, than at fifty paces; having experimentally found that, wherein one man has failed, another has hit; that what was unknown to one age, the age following has explained: and that arts and sciences are not cast in a mould, but are formed and perfected by degrees, by often handling and polishing, as bears leisurely lick their cubs into shape; what my force cannot discover, I do not yet desist to sound and to try; and, handling and kneading this new matter over and over again, turning and heating it, I lay open to him, that shall succeed me, a kind of facility to enjoy it more at his ease, and make it more manageable and supple for him:—

"Ut Hymettia sole
Cera remollescit, tractataque pollice multas
Vertitur in facies, ipsoque fit utilis usu"[1]:

as much will the second do to the third, which is the reason that difficulty ought not to make me despair; and my own incapacity as little; for 'tis only my own.

Man is as capable of all things, as of some: and if he confess, as Theophrastus says, the ignorance of first causes and principles, let him boldly surrender to me all the rest of his knowledge; if he is defective in foundation, his reason is on the ground: disputation and inquisition have no other aim but principles; if this do not stop his career, he runs into an infinite irresolution:—

"Non potest aliud alio magis minusve comprehendi, quoniam omnium rerum una est definitio comprehendendi."[2]

[1] "As Hymettian wax grows softer in the sun, and tempered by the fingers assumes various forms, and is rendered fit for use."—Ovid, *Met.*, x. 284.

[2] "One thing can be no more or less comprehended than another, because there is only one definition for comprehending all things."—Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 41.

Now 'tis very likely, that if the soul knew anything, it would in the first place know itself; and if it knew anything out of itself, it would be its own body and case, before anything else: if we see the gods of physic, to this very day, debating about our anatomy:—

"Mulciber in Trojam, pro Trojâ stabat Apollo"[1]:

when are we to expect that they will be agreed? We are nearer neighbours to ourselves than the whiteness of snow or the weight of stones are to us: if man does not know himself, how should he know his functions and powers? It is not, peradventure, that we have not some real knowledge in us, but 'tis by chance; and forasmuch as errors are received into our soul by the same way, after the same manner, and by the same conduct, it has not wherewithal to distinguish them, nor wherewithal to choose the truth from falsehood.

The Academics admitted a certain inclination of judgment, and thought it too crude to say, "that it was not more likely that snow was white than black, and that we were no more assured of the motion of a stone thrown by the hand than of that of the eighth sphere"; and to avoid this difficulty and strangeness, which can, in truth, not easily lodge in our imagination, though they conclude that we are in no sort capable of knowledge, and that truth is engulfed in so profound an abyss as is not to be penetrated by human sight; yet do they acknowledge some things to be more likely than others, and received into their judgment this faculty that we have a power to incline to one appearance more than to another: they allowed this propension, interdicting all resolution. The opinion of the

[1] "Vulcan against, for Troy Apollo stood."—Ovid, *Trist.*, 1, 2, 5:

Pyrrhonians is more bold, and also more likely: for this Academic inclination, and this propension to one proposition rather than to another, what is it other than a recognition of some more apparent truth in this than in that? If our understanding be capable of the form, lineaments, comportment, and face of truth, it would as well see it entire as by halves, springing and imperfect: this appearance of likelihood, which makes them rather take the left hand than the right, augments it: multiply this ounce of verisimilitude that turns the scales, to a hundred, to a thousand ounces: it will happen in the end that the balance will itself end the controversy, and determine one choice and one entire truth. But how is it they suffer themselves to incline to and be swayed by probability, if they know not the truth itself? How should they know the similitude of that whereof they do not know the essence? Either we can absolutely judge, or absolutely we cannot. If our intellectual and sensible faculties are without foot or foundation, if they only float and waver about, 'tis to no purpose that we suffer our judgment to be carried away by any part of their operation, what appearance soever it may seem to present to us; and the surest and most happy seat of our understanding would be that where it kept itself temperate, upright and inflexible, without tottering and without agitation:—

"Inter visa vera aut falsa, ad animi assensum nihil interest."[1]

That things do not lodge in us in their form and essence, and do not there make their entry by their own force and authority we sufficiently see: because if it were so, we should receive them after

[1] "As between things that seem true or false, it signifies nothing to the assent of the mind."—Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 28.

the same manner: wine would have the same relish with the sick as with the healthful; he who has his finger chapped or benumbed would find the same hardness in wood or iron that he handles that another does; outside subjects, then, submit themselves to our disposal, and are seated in us as we please. Now, if on our part we received anything without alteration, if human grasp were capable and strong enough to seize on truth by our own means, these being common to all men, this truth would be conveyed from hand to hand from one to another; and at least there would be some one thing to be found in the world, amongst so many as there are, that would be believed by men with an universal consent: but this, that there is no one proposition that is not debated and controverted amongst us, or that may not be, makes it very manifest that our natural judgment does not very clearly comprehend what it embraces; for my judgment cannot make itself accepted by the judgment of my companion, which is a sign that I seized it by some other means than by a natural power that is in me and in all other men.

Let us lay aside this infinite confusion of opinions which we see even amongst the philosophers themselves, and this perpetual and univeral dispute about the knowledge of things: for this is very truly presupposed, that men—I mean those highest and best born in knowledge and of the greatest parts—are not agreed about any one thing, not even that heaven is over our heads, for they that doubt of everything also doubt of that; and they who deny that we are able to comprehend anything, say that we have not comprehended that the heaven is over our heads; and these two opinions are without comparison the stronger in number.

Besides this infinite diversity and division, through the trouble that our judgment gives to ourselves, and the uncertainty that every one is sensible of in himself, 'tis easy to perceive that its seat is very unstable and unsecure. How variously do we judge of things? how often do we alter our opinions? What I hold and believe to-day, I hold and believe with my whole belief: all my instruments and engines seize and take hold of this opinion, and become responsible to me for it as much as in them lies; I could not embrace nor preserve any truth with greater assurance than I do this; I am wholly and entirely possessed with it: but has it not befallen me, not only once, but a thousand times, and every day, to have embraced some other thing with the same instruments, and in the same condition, which I have since judged to be false? A man must, at least, become wise at his own expense; if I have often found myself betrayed under this colour, if my touch prove ordinarily false and my balance unequal and unjust, what assurance can I now have more than at other times? is it not folly to suffer myself to be so often deceived by my guide? Nevertheless, let fortune remove and shift us five hundred times from place to place, let her do nothing but incessantly empty and fill into our belief, as into a vessel, other and other opinions, yet still the present and the last is the one certain and infallible: for this we must abandon goods, honour, life, health, and all:—

"Posterior . . . res ulla reperta
Perdit et immutat sensus ad pristina quæque."[1]

[1] "The last thing we find out is ever the best, and makes us disrelish all the former."—Lucretius, v. 1413.

Whatever is preached to us, whatever we learn, we should still remember that it is man that gives and man that receives; 'tis a mortal hand that presents it to us, 'tis a mortal hand that accepts it. The things that come to us from heaven have the sole right and authority of persuasion, the sole mark of truth: which also we do not see with our own eyes nor receive by our own means: that great and sacred image could not abide in so wretched a habitation, if God, for this end, did not prepare it, if God did not, by His particular and supernatural grace and favour, fortify and reform it. At least our frail and defective condition ought to make us comport ourselves with more reservedness and moderation in our innovations and changes: we ought to remember that whatever we receive into the understanding we often receive things that are false, and that it is by the same instruments that so often give themselves the lie, and are so often deceived.

Now, it is no wonder they should so often contradict themselves, being so easy to be turned and swayed by very light occurrences. It is certain that our apprehension, our judgment, and the faculties of the soul in general, suffer according to the movements and alterations of the body, which alterations are continual: are not our wits more sprightly, our memory more prompt, our discourse more lively, in health than in sickness? Do not joy and gaiety make us receive subjects that present themselves to our souls, quite otherwise than care and melancholy? Do you believe that the verses of Catullus or of Sappho please an old doting miser as they do a vigorous and amorous young man? Cleomenes, the son of Anaxandridas, being sick, his friends reproached him that he had humours

and whimsies that were new and unaccustomed: "I believe it," said he, "neither am I the same man now as when I am in health: being now another thing, my opinions and fancies are also other than they were before."[1] In our courts of justice 'tis said of criminals, when they find the judges in a good humour, gentle and mild, "Gaudeat de bonâ fortunâ."[2] For it is most certain that men's judgments are sometimes more prone to condemnation, more sharp and severe, and at others more facile, easy, and inclined to excuse. He that carries with him from his house the pain of the gout, jealousy, or theft by his man, having his whole soul possessed with anger, it is not to be doubted but that his judgment will be warped in that direction. That venerable senate of the Areopagus was wont to hear and determine by night, for fear lest the sight of the parties might corrupt their justice. The very air itself and the serenity of heaven will cause some mutation in us, according to the Greek verses rendered in Cicero:—

> "Tales sunt hominum mentes, quali pater ipse
> Juppiter auctificâ lustravit lampade terras."[3]

'Tis not only fevers, debauches, and great accidents that overthrow our judgment; the least things in the world will do it; and we are not to doubt, though we are not sensible of it, but that if a continued fever can overwhelm the soul, a tertian will in some proportionate measure alter it; if an apoplexy can stupefy and totally extinguish the sight of our understanding, we are not to doubt but

[1] Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*
[2] "Let him rejoice in his good fortune."
[3] "Such are the minds of men, as Father Jupiter himself has shed light on the earth with his growing luminary."—Homer's *Odyssey*, xviii. 135.

that a great cold will dazzle it; and consequently there is hardly a single hour in a man's life wherein our judgment is in its due place and right condition, our bodies being subject to so many continual changes, and replete with so many several sorts of springs, that I believe what the physicians say, how hard it is but that there will not be always some one or other out of order.

As to what remains, this malady does not very easily discover itself, unless it be extreme and past remedy; forasmuch as reason goes always lame and halting, and that as well with falsehood as with truth; and therefore 'tis hard to discover her deviations and mistakes. I always call that appearance of meditation which every one forges in himself, reason: this reason, of the condition of which there may be a hundred contrary ones about the same subject, is an instrument of lead and wax, ductile, pliable, and accommodable to all sorts of biasses and to all measures, so that nothing remains but the knowledge how to turn and mould it. How uprightly soever a judge may resolve to act, if he do not well look to himself, which few care to do, his inclination to friendship, to relationship, to beauty, or revenge, and not only things of that weight, but even the fortuitous instinct that makes us favour one thing more than another, and that, without the reason's leave, puts the choice upon us in two equal subjects, or some other shadowy futility may insensibly insinuate into his judgment the recommendation or disfavour of a cause, and make the balance dip.

I, who watch myself as narrowly as I can, and who have my eyes continually bent upon myself, like one that has no great business elsewhere to do:—

"Quis sub Arcto
Rex gelidæ metuatur oræ,
Quid Tiridatem terreat, unice
Securus,"[1]

dare hardly tell the vanity and weakness I find in myself; my foot is so unstable and stands so slippery, I find it so apt to totter and reel, and my sight so disordered, that fasting I am quite another man than when full; if health and a fair day smile upon me, I am a very good fellow; if a corn trouble my toe, I am sullen, out of humour, and inaccessible. The same pace of a horse seems to me one while hard and another easy; the same way, one while shorter and another while longer; the same form, one while more and another while less taking. Now I am for doing everything, and then for doing nothing at all; what pleases me now would be a trouble to me at another time. I have a thousand senseless and casual humours within myself; either I am possessed by melancholy, or swayed by choler; and, by its own private authority, now sadness predominates in me, and now cheerfulness. When I take books, I have discovered admirable graces in such and such passages, and such as have struck my soul: let me light upon them at another time, I may turn and toss, tumble and rattle the leaves to much purpose; 'tis then to me a shapeless and incongruous mass. Even in my own writings, I do not always find the air of my first fancy: I know not what I meant to say; and am often put to it to correct and pump for a new sense, because I have lost the first, that was better. I do nothing but go and come: my judgment does not always advance; it floats and wanders:—

[1] "Alone secure, whatever king be dreaded in the frozen North, or what affrights Tiridates."—Hor., *Od.*, i. 26, 3.

"Velut minuta magno
Deprensa navis in mari, vesaniente vento."[1]

Very often, as I am apt to do, having for sport and exercise undertaken to maintain an opinion contrary to my own, my mind bending and applying itself that way, so strongly engages me there, that I no longer discern the reason of my former belief, and forsake it. I am, as it were, drawn on to the side to which I lean, be it what it will, and carried away by my own weight.

Every one would almost say the same of himself, if he considered himself as I do; preachers very well know that the emotions which steal upon them in speaking animate them towards belief; and in a passion we are more stiff in the defence of our proposition, receive a deeper impression of it and embrace it with greater vehemence and approbation, than we do in our colder and more temperate senses. You give your counsel a simple brief of your cause; he returns you a dubious and uncertain answer: you feel that he is indifferent which side he takes: have you fee'd him well that he may consider it the better? does he begin to be really concerned? and do you find him truly interested and zealous in your quarrel? His reason and learning will by degrees grow hot in your cause; a manifest and undoubted truth presents itself to his understanding; he discovers an altogether new light in your business, and does in good earnest believe and persuade himself that it is so. Nay, I do not know whether the ardour that springs from spite and obstinacy, against the power and violence of the magistrate and danger, or the interest of reputation, may not have made

[1] "Like a small bark surprised upon the great sea, when the winds ruffle it."—Catullus, *Ep.*, xxv. 12.

some men, even to the stake, maintain the opinion for which, at liberty and amongst friends, he would not have burned the tip of his finger. The shocks and jostles that the soul receives from the passions of the body can do much in it, but its own can do a great deal more; to the which it is so subjected that, peradventure, it may be established that it has no other pace and motion but from the breath of those winds, without the agitation of which it would be becalmed and without action, like a ship in the open sea, to which the winds have denied their assistance: and whoever should maintain this, siding with the Peripatetics, would do us no great wrong, seeing it is very well known that most of the finest actions of the soul proceed from and stand in need of this impulse of the passions; valour, they say, cannot be perfect without the assistance of anger:—

"Semper Ajax fortis, fortissimus tamen in force,"[1]

neither do we encounter the wicked and the enemy vigorously enough if we be not angry; nay, the advocate has to inspire the judges with anger to obtain justice.

Strong desires moved Themistocles, moved Demosthenes, and have pushed on the philosophers to work, watching, and pilgrimages; they lead us to honour, learning, health, all very useful ends: and this weakness of the soul in suffering anxiety and trouble serves to breed in the conscience penitence and repentance, and to make us see in the scourge of God and political troubles the chastisement of our offences. Compassion is a spur to clemency; and prudence to preserve

[1] "Ajax was always brave, but bravest when in phrenzy."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, iv. 23.

and govern ourselves is aroused by our fear; and how many brave actions have been born of ambition? how many by presumption? In a word, there is no eminent and sprightly virtue without some irregular agitation. Should not this be one of the reasons that moved the Epicureans to discharge God from all care and solicitude of our affairs, because even the effects of His goodness could not be exercised in our behalf, without disturbing His repose, by the means of passions, which are so many spurs and instruments pricking on the soul to virtuous actions? or have they thought otherwise, and taken them for tempests that shamefully hurry the soul from her tranquillity?—

"Ut maris tranquillitas intelligitur, nulla, ne mimina quidem, aura fluctus commovente: sic animi quietus et placatus status cernitur, quum perturbatio nulla est, quâ moveri queat."[1]

What varieties of sense and reason, what contrarieties of imaginations, do the diversities of our passions present to us? What assurance, then, can we take of a thing so mobile and unstable, subject, by its conditions, to the dominion of trouble, and never going other than a forced and borrowed pace? If our judgment be in the power even of sickness and perturbation; if it be from craze and temerity that it has to receive the impression of things, what security can we expect from it?

Is it not a great boldness in philosophy to believe that men perform the greatest actions, those nearest approaching the divinity, when they are furious, mad, and beside themselves?[2] we are to better

[1] "As it is understood to be a calm at sea when there is not the least breath of air stirring, so the state of the soul is discerned to be quiet and appeased when there is no perturbation to move it."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, v. 6.

[2] Plato, *Phædrus.*

ourselves by the deadening and privation of our reason; the two natural ways to enter into the cabinet of the gods, and there to foresee the course of destiny, are fury and sleep[1]: this is pleasant to consider; by the dislocation that passions cause in our reason, we become virtuous; by its extirpation, occasioned by fury, or the image of death, we become diviners and prophets. I was never so willing to believe philosophy in anything as in this. 'Tis a pure enthusiasm wherewith sacred truth has inspired the spirit of philosophy, which makes it confess, contrary to its own proposition, that the most calm, composed, and healthful estate of the soul that philosophy can seat it in, is not its best condition: our wisdom is less wise than folly: our dreams are worth more than our meditation: the worst place we can take is in ourselves. But does not philosophy think that we are wise enough to remark that the voice that the spirit utters, when dismissed from man, so clear-sighted, so grand, so perfect, and, whilst it is in man, so terrestrial, ignorant, and obscure, is a voice proceeding from the spirit which is in obscure, terrestrial, and ignorant man, and, for this reason, a voice not to be trusted and believed?

I have no great experience of these vehement agitations, being of a soft and heavy complexion, the most of which surprise the soul on a sudden, without giving it leisure to recollect itself: but the passion that is said to be produced by idleness in the hearts of young men, though it proceed leisurely and with a measured progress, evidently manifests to those who have tried to oppose its power, the violence our judgment suffers in the alteration and conversion. I have formerly at-

[1] Cicero, *De Div.*, i. 57.

tempted to withstand and repel it; for I am so far from being one of those who invite vices, that I do not so much as follow them, if they do not haul me along: I perceived it to spring, grow, and increase in despite of my resistance, and at last, living and seeing as I was, wholly to seize and possess me, so that, as if newly roused from drunkenness, the images of things began to appear to me quite other than they were wont to be; I evidently saw the person I desired, grow and increase in advantages of beauty, and to expand and develop fairer by the influence of my imagination; the difficulties of my pursuit to grow more easy and smooth; and both my reason and conscience to be laid aside; but, this fire being evaporated, in an instant, as from a flash of lightning, I was aware that my soul resumed another kind of sight, another state, and another judgment; the difficulties of retreat appeared great and invincible, and the same things had quite another taste and aspect than the heat of desire had presented them to me. Which of these most probably? Pyrrho himself knows nothing about it. We are never without sickness: fevers have their hot and cold fits; from the effects of an ardent passion we fall into a shivering passion; as far as I had advanced, so much I retired:—

> "Qualis ubi alterno procurrens gurgite pontus,
> Nunc ruit ad terras, scopulisque superjacit undam
> Spumeus, extremamque sinu perfundit arenam;
> Nunc rapidus retro, atque æstu revoluta resorbens
> Saxa fugit, littusque vado labente relinquit."[1]

[1] "As when the sea, rolling with alternate tides, now rushes on the land and foaming throws over the rocks its waves, and with its skirts overflows the extremity of the strand: now, with rapid motion, and sucking in the stones, rolled back with the tide in its retreat, and with the ebbing current leaves the shore."—Virgil, *Æneid*, xi. 624.

Now, from the knowledge of this volubility of mine, I have accidentally begot in myself a certain constancy of opinion, and have not much altered those that were first and natural in me: for what appearance soever there may be in novelty, I do not easily change, for fear of losing by the bargain: and since I am not capable of choosing, I take other men's choice, and keep myself in the state wherein God has placed me; I could not otherwise prevent myself from perpetual rolling. Thus have I, by the grace of God, preserved myself entire, without anxiety or trouble of conscience, in the ancient belief of our religion, amidst so many sects and divisions as our age has produced. The writings of the ancients, the best authors I mean, being full and solid, tempt and carry me which way almost they will: he that I am reading, seems always to have the most force, and I find that every one of them in turn has reason, though they contradict one another. The facility that good wits have of rendering everything they would recommend likely, and that there is nothing so strange to which they will not undertake to give colour enough to deceive such a simplicity as mine, this evidently shows the weakness of their testimony. The heavens and the stars have been three thousand years in motion; all the world were of that belief till Cleanthes the Samian,[1] or, according to Theophratus, Nicetas of Syracuse, bethought him to maintain that it was the earth that moved, turning about its axis by the oblique circle of the zodiac; and in our time Copernicus has so grounded this doctrine, that it very regularly serves to all astrological consequences: what use can we make of this, except that we need not much care which

[1] Plutarch, *On the Face of the Moon*, c. 4.

is the true opinion? And who knows but that a third, a thousand years hence, may overflow the two former?—

> "Sic volvenda ætas commutat tempora rerum:
> Quod fuit in pretio, fit nullo denique honore;
> Porro aliud succedit, et e contemptibus exit,
> Inque dies magis appetitur, floretque repertum
> Laudibus, et miro est mortales inter honore."[1]

So that when any new doctrine presents itself to us, we have great reason to mistrust it, and to consider that before it was set on foot the contrary had been in vogue; and that as that has been overthrown by this, a third invention in time to come may start up which may knock the second on the head. Before the principles that Aristotle introduced were in reputation, other principles contented human reason, as these satisfy us now. What letters-patent have these, what particular privilege, that the career of our invention must be stopped by them, and that to them should appertain for all time to come the possession of our belief? They are no more exempt from being thrust out of doors than their predecessors were. When any one presses me with a new argument, I ought to consider that what I cannot answer, another may: for to believe all likelihoods that a man cannot himself confute is great simplicity; it would by that means come to pass that all the vulgar, and we are all of the vulgar, would have their belief as turnable as a weathercock: for the soul, being so easily imposed upon and without resisting power, would be forced incessantly to

[1] "Thus revolving time changes the seasons of things; that which was once in estimation becomes of no reputation at all, while another thing succeeds and bursts forth from contempt, is daily more sought, and, when found, flourishes among mankind with praises and wonderful honour."—Lucretius, v. 1275.

receive other and other impressions, the last still effacing all footsteps of that which went before. He that finds himself weak, ought to answer as in law questions, that he will speak with his counsel; or will refer himself to the wise from whom he received his teaching. How long is it that physic has been practised in the world? 'Tis said that a new comer, called Paracelsus, changes and overthrows the whole order of ancient rules, and maintains that till now it has been of no other use but to kill men. I believe that he will easily make this good; but I do not think it were wisdom to venture my life in making trial of his new experiments. We are not to believe every one, says the precept, because every one can say all things. A man of this profession of novelties and physical reformations, not long since told me that all the ancients were notoriously mistaken in the nature and motions of the winds, which he would evidently demonstrate to me, if I would give him the hearing. After I had with some patience heard his arguments, which were all full of likelihood of truth: "What then," said I, "did those that sailed according to Theophrastus, make way westward when they had the prow towards the east! did they go sideward or backward?" "That was according to fortune," answered he; "but be that as it may, they were mistaken." I then replied that I had rather follow effects than reason. Now these things often clash, and I have been told that in geometry, which pretends to have gained the highest point of certainty among all the sciences, there are found inevitable demonstrations that subvert the truth of all experience: as Jacques de Pelletier told me at my own house, that he had found out two lines stretching themselves one

towards the other to meet, which, nevertheless, he affirmed, though extended to all infinity, could never reach to touch one another. And the Pyrrhonians make no other use of their arguments and their reason than to ruin the appearance of experience; and 'tis a wonder how far the suppleness of our reason has followed them in this design of controverting the evidence of effects: for they affirm that we do not move, that we do not speak, and that there is neither weight nor heat, with the same force of argument, that we affirm the most likely things. Ptolemy, who was a great man, had established the bounds of this world of ours: all the ancient philosophers thought they had the measure of it, excepting some remote isles that might escape their knowledge; it had been Pyrrhonism, a thousand years ago, to doubt the science of cosmography, and the opinions that every one had thence received: it was heresy to believe in Antipodes; and behold! in this age of ours there is an infinite extent of *terra firma* discovered, not an island or a particular country, but a part very nearly equal in greatness to that we knew before. The geographers of our times stick not to assure us, that now all is found, all is seen:—

"Nam quod adest, præsto placet, et pollere videtur."[1]

But the question is whether, if Ptolemy was therein formerly deceived,[2] upon the foundations of his reason, it were not very foolish to trust now in what

[1] "For what is present pleases, and seems to prevail."—Lucretius, iv. 1411.

[2] Ptolemy was then, and long after, accounted the highest geographical authority; but the inaccuracy of his astronomical knowledge betrayed him into an erroneous theory of the relations of the members of the Cosmos.

these later people say: and whether it is not more likely that this great body, which we call the world, is not quite another thing than what we imagine.

Plato says that it changes its aspect in all respects; that the heavens, the stars, and the sun have all of them sometimes motions retrograde to what we see, changing east into west. The Egyptian priests told Herodotus, that from the time of their first king, which was eleven thousand and odd years before (and they showed him the effigies of all their kings in statues taken from the life), the sun had four times altered his course: that the sea and the earth alternately change into one another: that the beginning of the world is undetermined: Aristotle and Cicero both say the same; and one amongst us is of opinion that it has been from all eternity, is mortal, and renewed again by successive vicissitudes, calling Solomon and Isaiah to witness: and this to evade these objections that God has once been a creator without a creature; that He had had nothing to do; that He abandoned this idleness by putting His hand to this work; and that, consequently, He is subject to changes. In the most famous of the Greek schools,[1] the world is taken for a god, made by another god greater than he, and is composed of a body, and of a soul fixed in his centre, and dilating himself, by musical numbers, to his circumference: divine, infinitely happy, infinitely great, infinitely wise, and eternal: in him are other gods, the sea, the earth, the stars, who entertain one another with a harmonious and perpetual agitation and divine dance: sometimes meeting, sometimes retiring; concealing, discovering themselves; changing their order, one while before, and another behind. Heraclitus[2] was

[1] That of Plato.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, ix. 8.

positive that the world was composed of fire, and, by the order of destiny, was one day to be enflamed and consumed in fire, and then to be again renewed. And Apuleius says of men :—

"Sigillatim mortales, cunctim perpetui."[1]

Alexander wrote to his mother[2] the narration of an Egyptian priest, drawn from their monuments, testifying the antiquity of that nation to be infinite, and comprising the birth and progress of other countries. Cicero and Diodorus[3] say, that in their time, the Chaldeans kept a register of four hundred thousand and odd years : Aristotle, Pliny,[4] and others, that Zoroaster flourished six thousand years before Plato's time. Plato says that they of the city of Sais have records in writing of eight thousand years, and that the city of Athens was built a thousand years before the said city of Sais. Epicurus, that at the same time things are here as we see them, they are alike and in the same manner in several other worlds ; which he would have delivered with greater assurance had he seen the similitudes and concordances of the new discovered world of the West Indies, with ours present and past, in so many strange examples.

In earnest, considering what has arrived at our knowledge from the course of this terrestrial polity, I have often wondered to see in so vast a distance of places and times such a concurrence of so great a number of popular and wild opinions, and of savage manners and beliefs, which by no tendency

[1] "That they are mortal in particular, and immortal in general."—*De Dæmone Socratis.*

[2] The letter is most probably apocryphal ; at all events it is now lost.

[3] Cicero, *De Div.*, i. 19 ; Diodorus, ii. 31.

[4] *Nat. Hist.*, xxx. 1.

seem to proceed from our natural meditation. Human wit is a great worker of miracles. But this relation has in it circumstances especially extraordinary; 'tis found to be in names also and a thousand other things: for they discovered nations there that, for aught we know, never heard of us, where circumcision was in use[1]: where there were states and great civil governments maintained by women only, without men; where our fasts and Lent were represented, to which was added the abstinence from women: where our crosses were several ways in repute: here they were made use of to honour and adorn their sepultures; there they were erected, and notably that of St. Andrew, to protect people from nocturnal visions, and to lay upon the cradles of infants against enchantments; elsewhere, there was found one of wood, of very great stature, which was adored as the god of rain, and this a long way into the main land, and there was also seen an express image of our shriving-priests, with the use of mitres, the celibacy of the priesthood, the art of divination by the entrails of sacrificed beasts, abstinence from all sorts of flesh and fish in their diet, the custom of priests officiating in a particular and not the vulgar language: and this fancy, that the first god was expelled by a second, his younger brother: that men were created with all sorts of conveniences, which have since been taken from them for their sins, their territory changed, and their natural condition made worse: that they were of old overwhelmed by the inundation of waters from heaven; that but few families escaped, who retired into the caves of high mountains, the mouths of which they stopped so that the waters could not

[1] Many of these illustrations are altogether disputable.

get in, having shut up, together with themselves, several sorts of animals; that when they perceived the rain to cease, they sent out dogs, which returning clean and wet, they judged that the water was not much abated; afterward, sending out others, and seeing them return dirty, they issued out to repeople the world, which they found only full of serpents. In one place some found the persuasion of a day of judgment, insomuch that the people were marvellously displeased with the Spaniards for disturbing the bones of the dead in rifling the sepultures for riches, saying that those bones, so disordered, could not easily rejoin; traffic by exchange, and no other way; fairs and markets for that end; dwarfs and deformed people for the ornament of the tables of princes; the use of falconry, according to the nature of their hawks; tyrannical subsidies; great refinements in gardens; dances, tumbling tricks, music of instruments, coats of arms, tennis-courts, dice and games of hazard, wherein they are sometimes so eager and hot, as to stake and play themselves and their liberty; physic, no otherwise than by charms; the way of writing in cypher; the belief of only one first man, the father of all nations; the adoration of a god, who formerly lived a man in perfect virginity, fasting and penitence, preaching the law of Nature and the ceremonies of religion, and who vanished from the world without a natural death; the belief in giants; the custom of making themselves drunk with their beverages and drinking to the utmost; religious ornaments painted with bones and dead men's skulls; surplices, holy water sprinkling; wives and servants who present themselves with emulation to be burned and interred with the dead husband or master; a law by which

the eldest succeeds to all the estate, no other portion being left for the younger but obedience; the custom that upon promotion to a certain office of great authority, the promoted is to take upon him a new name and to leave that he had before: another, to strew lime upon the knee of the new-born child, with these words, "From dust thou camest, and to dust thou must return": the art of augury. These vain shadows of our religion, which are observable in some of these examples, are testimonies of its dignity and divinity; not only has it in some sort insinuated itself into all the infidel nations on this side of the world, by a certain imitation, but into these barbarians also, as by a common and supernatural inspiration; for we found there the belief of purgatory, but of a new form; that which we give to the fire they give to the cold, and imagine that souls are both purged and punished by the rigour of an excessive coldness. And this example puts me in mind of another pleasant diversity: for as there were, on the one hand, found people who took a pride to unmuffle the glands of their members, and clipped off the prepuce after the Mahommedan and Jewish manner, there were others who made so great a scruple about laying it bare, that they carefully pursed it up with little strings to keep that end from peeping into the air; and of this other diversity, that whereas we, to honour kings and festivals, put on the best clothes we have, in some of these regions, to express their disparity and submission to their king, his subjects present themselves before him in their vilest habits, and, entering his palace, throw some old tattered garment over their better apparel, to the end that all the lustre and ornament may solely remain in him. But to proceed.

If Nature enclose within the bounds of her ordinary progress, as well as all other things, the beliefs, judgments, and opinions of men: if they have their revolution, their season, their birth and death, like cabbages; if the heavens agitate and rule them at their pleasure, what magisterial and permanent authority are we to attribute to them? If we experimentally see that the form of our being depends upon the air, upon the climate, and upon the soil where we are born, and not only the colour, the stature, the complexion, and the countenances, but moreover the very faculties of the soul itself:—

"Et plaga cœli non solum ad robur corporum, sed etiam animorum facit,"[1]

says Vegetius; and that the goddess who founded the city of Athens chose to situate it in a temperature of air fit to make men sharp, as the Egyptian priests told Solon:—

"Athenis tenue cœlum; ex quo etiam acutiores putantur Attici: crassum Thebis; itaque pingues Thebani, et valentes,"[2]

so that as fruits and animals are born differing, men should also be born more or less warlike, just, temperate, and docile; here given to wine, elsewhere to theft or lechery; here inclined to superstition, elsewhere to misbelief; in one place to liberty, in another to servitude; capable of one science or of one art; dull or ingenious, obedient or mutinous, good or ill, according as the place where they are seated inclines them; and assume a new complexion, if removed like trees: which was the

[1] "The climate is of great efficacy, not only to the strength of bodies, but to that of minds also."—Vegetius, i. 2.

[2] "At Athens the air is thin; whence also the Athenians are reputed to be more acute: at Thebes more thick, therefore the Thebans are looked upon as fatter-headed and stronger of body."—Cicero, *De Fato*, c. 4.

reason why Cyrus would not grant the Persians leave to quit their rough and craggy country to remove to another more pleasant and level, saying,[1] that soft and fertile soils made men effeminate and unfertile. If we see one while one art, one belief flourish, and another while another, through some celestial influence: such an age produce such natures and incline mankind in such and such a direction: the spirits of men one while gay and another grum, like our fields: what becomes of all those fine prerogatives we so soothe ourselves with? Seeing that a wise man may be mistaken, a hundred men, a hundred nations, nay, that even human nature itself, as we believe, is many ages wide in one thing or another, what assurance have we that she sometimes is not mistaken, or not in this very age of ours?

Methinks, amongst other testimonies of our imbecility, this ought not to be forgotten, that man cannot, by his own wish and desire, find out what is necessary for him; that, not in fruition only, but in imagination and wish, we cannot agree about what we would have to content us. Let us leave it to our thought to cut out and make up at its pleasure: it cannot so much as covet what is proper for it, and satisfy itself:—

> "Quid enim ratione timemus,
> Aut cupimus? Quid tam dextro pede concipis, ut te
> Conatus non pœniteat, votique peracti?"[2]

And therefore it was that Socrates begged nothing of the gods but what they knew to be best for him; and the, both private and public, prayers of the

[1] Herodotus, ix. 121.

[2] "For what with reason do we fear or wish? What is there dexterously conceived that afterwards you do not repent, both the attempt and even the success?"—Juvenal, x. 4.

Lacedæmonians were only simply to obtain good and useful things, referring the choice and selection of these to the discretion of the Supreme Power[1]:—

> "Conjugium petimus, partumque uxoris; at illis
> Notum, qui pueri, qualisque futura sit uxor"[2];

and Christians pray to God "that His will may be done": that they may not fall into the inconvenience the poets feign of King Midas. He prayed to the gods that all he touched might be turned into gold; his prayer was heard; his wine was gold, his bread was gold, the feathers of his bed, his shirt and clothes were all turned into gold, so that he found himself overwhelmed under the fruition of his desire, and enriched with an intolerable commodity, and was fain to unpray his prayers:—

> "Attonitus novitate mali, divesque miserque,
> Effugere optat opes, et, quæ modo voverat, odit."[3]

To instance in myself: when young, I desired of fortune above all things the order of St. Michael, which was then the utmost distinction of honour amongst the French noblesse, and very rare. She pleasantly gratified my longing; instead of raising me and lifting me up from my own place to attain it, she was much kinder to me, for she brought it so low and made it so cheap that it stooped down to my shoulders, and lower. Cleobis and Biton,[4] Trophonius and Agamedes,[5] having requested, the

[1] Plato, *Second Alcibiades.*

[2] "We seek marriage and the lying-in of the wife; but it is known to them [the gods] what the children and wife will be."—Juvenal, x. 352.

[3] "Astonished at the strangeness of the evil, at once rich and wretched, he wishes now to escape wealth, and hates the thing for which he had just prayed."—Ovid, *Met.*, xi. 128.

[4] Herodotus, i. 31.

[5] Plutarch, *Consolation to Apollonius*, c. 14.

first of their goddess, the last of their god, a recompense worthy of their piety, had death for a reward; so differing are the heavenly opinions concerning what is fit for us from our own. God might grant us riches, honours, life, and health itself, sometimes to our hurt; for everything that is pleasing to us is not always good for us. If he send us death or an increase of sickness, instead of a cure:—

"Virga tua et baculus tuus ipsa me consolata sunt,"[1]

He does it by the reasons of His providence, which better and more certainly discerns what is proper for us than we can do; and we ought to take it in good part, as coming from a wise and most friendly hand:

"Si consilium vis:
Permittes ipsis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebusque sit utile nostris . . .
Carior est illis homo quam sibi"[2]:

for to require from them honours or commands is to ask them to throw you into a battle, set you upon a cast at dice, or something of the like nature, whereof the issue is to you unknown and the fruit doubtful.

There is no so sharp and violent dispute amongst the philosophers, as about the question of the sovereign good of man; out of which, by the calculation of Varro,[3] there arose two hundred and four score and eight sects:—

"Qui autem de summo bono dissentit, de totâ philosophiæ ratione disputat."[4]

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[1] "Thy rod and thy staff have comforted me."—*Psalm* xxii. 4.

[2] "If you wish advice, you will let the gods consider what is useful for us and our affairs, for man is dearer to them than he is to himself."—Juvenal, x. 346

[3] St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, xix. 2.

[4] "For whoever enters into controversy concerning the supreme good, disputes upon the whole reason of philosophy."—Cicero, *De Finibus*, v. 5.

"Tres mihi convivæ prope dissentire videntur,
Poscentes vario multum diversa palato:
Quid dem? Quid non dem? Renuis tu, quod jubet alter;
Quod petis, id sane est invisum acidumque duobus"[1]:

nature should say the same to their contests and debates. Some say that our well-being lies in virtue, others in pleasure, others in our submitting to nature; one in knowledge, another in being exempt from pain; another, in not suffering ourselves to be carried away by appearances: and this fancy seems to have relation to that of the ancient Pythagoras:—

"Nil admirari, prope res est una, Numici,
Solaque, quæ possit facere et servare beatum"[2];

which is the point of the Pyrrhonian sect: Aristotle[3] attributes the wondering at nothing to magnanimity, and Archesilaus said,[4] that constancy and a right and inflexible state of judgment were the true goods, consent and application vices and evils; it is true that in being thus positive and establishing it by certain axiom, he quitted Pyrrhonism; for the Pyrrhonians, when they say that Ataraxy,[5] which is the immobility of the judgment, is the sovereign good, do not design to say it affirmatively; but the same motion of the soul which makes them avoid precipices and take shelter from the evening damp, presents to them this fancy, and makes them refuse another.

How much do I wish, that whilst I live, either

[1] "Three guests of mine wholly differ, each man's palate requiring something that the others do not like. What am I to give? What not give? You refuse what the others desire: what you seek the two others say is odious and sour."—Horace, *Ep.*, ii. 2, 61.

[2] "Not to admire is all the art I know,
To make men happy, and to keep them so."—Horace, *Ep.*, i. 6, 1.
"Admire," in the sense of not being surprised at anything.

[3] *Nichom. Ethics*, iv. 3.

[4] Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrh. Hypot.*, i. 33.

[5] Perfect tranquillity.

some other, or Justus Lipsius, the most learned man now living, of a most polished and judicious understanding, truly resembling my Turnebus, had the will and health and leisure sufficient candidly and carefully as possible to collect into a register, according to their divisions and classes, the opinions of ancient philosophy on the subject of our being and our manners; their controversies, the succession and reputation of the parts, the application of the lives of the authors and their disciples to their own precepts on memorable and exemplary occasions: what a beautiful and useful work that would be!

To continue: if it be from ourselves that we are to extract the rules of our manners, upon what a confusion are we thrown? for that which our reason advises us to as the most probable, is generally for every one to obey the laws of his country, as was the advice of Socrates, inspired, he tells us, by a divine counsel; and thence what results but that our duty has no other rule than what is accidental? Truth ought to have a like and universal visage: if man could know equity and justice that had a body and a true being, he would not fetter it to the conditions of this country or that; it would not be from the whimsies of the Persians or Indians that virtue would receive its form. There is nothing more subject to perpetual agitation than the laws: since the time that I was born, I have known those of the English, our neighbours, three or four times changed, not only in matters of civil regimen, which is that wherein constancy may be dispensed with, but in the most important subject that can be, namely, religion: at which I am the more troubled and ashamed, because it is a nation with which those of my province have formerly had so great familiarity and

acquaintance, that there yet remain in my house some traces of our ancient kindred. And here with us at home, I have known a thing that was a capital offence become lawful; and we who hold others to it, are likewise, according to the chances of war, in a possibility of being found one day guilty of high treason, both divine and human, should ever justice fall into the power of injustice, and, after a few years' possession, taking a quite contrary being. How could that ancient god[1] more clearly accuse the ignorance of human knowledge concerning the Divine being, and give men to understand that their religion was but a thing of their own contrivance, useful to bind their society, than declaring as he did to those who came to his tripod for instruction, "that every one's true worship was that which he found in use in the place where he chanced to be"? O God, what infinite obligation have we to the benignity of our sovereign Creator, for having disabused our belief from these wandering and arbitrary devotions, and for having seated it upon the eternal foundation of His Holy Word? What will, then, philosophy say to us in this necessity? Why, "that we follow the laws of our country," that is to say, that floating sea of the opinions of a republic or a prince that will paint justice for me in as many colours and reform it as many ways as there are changes of passion in themselves: I cannot suffer my judgment to be so flexible. What kind of goodness is that which I see to-day in repute, and that to-morrow shall be in none, and which the crossing of a river makes a crime? What truth is it that these mountains enclose, and which is a lie in the world beyond them?

[1] Apollo.

But they are pleasant, when to give some certainty to the laws, they say that there are some firm, perpetual and immutable, which they call natural, that are imprinted in mankind by the condition of their own proper being; and of these, some reckon up three, some four, some more; and some less, a sign that it is a mark as doubtful as the rest. Now they are so unfortunate (for what can I call it else but misfortune, that of so infinite a number of laws there should not be found one at least that fortune and the temerity of chance has suffered to be universally received by the consent of all nations)?—they are, I say, so miserably unfortunate, that of these three or four select laws there is not so much as one that is not contradicted and disowned, not only by one nation but by many. Now the only likely sign by which they can argue or infer some laws to be natural is the universality of approbation; for we should, without doubt, follow by common consent that which nature had really ordained for us; and not only every nation, but every particular man would resent the force and violence that any one should do him, who would impel him to anything contrary to this law. Let them produce me but one of this condition. Protagoras and Aristo gave no other essence to the justice of laws than the authority and opinion of the legislator; and that, these put aside, the honest and the good would lose their qualities, and remain empty names of indifferent things: Thrasymachus in Plato[1] is of opinion that there is no other law but the convenience of the superior. There is not anything wherein the world is so various as in laws and customs; such a thing is abominable here, which is elsewhere in esteem, as in Lacedæmon dexterity

[1] *Republic.*

in stealing; marriages within degrees of consanguinity are capitally interdicted amongst us; they are elsewhere in honour:—

> "Gentes esse feruntur,
> In quibus et nato genitrix, et nata parenti,
> Jungitur, et pietas geminato crescit amore"[1];

the murder of infants, the murder of fathers, community of wives, traffic in robberies, licence in all sorts of voluptuousness; in short, there is nothing so extreme that is not allowed by the custom of some nation or other.

It is credible that there are natural laws, as we see in other creatures, but they are lost in us; this fine human reason everywhere so insinuating itself to govern and command, as to shuffle and confound the face of things, according to its own vanity and inconstancy:—

> "Nihil itaque amplius nostrum est; quod nostrum dico, artis est."[2]

Subjects have divers aspects and divers considerations, and from this the diversity of opinions principally proceeds; one nation considers a subject in one aspect and stops there; another takes it in another aspect.

There is nothing of greater horror to be imagined than for a man to eat his father; and yet the nations whose custom anciently it was so to do,[3] looked upon it as a testimony of piety and natural affection, seeking thereby to give their progenitors the most worthy and honourable sepulture; storing

[1] "'Tis said there are some nations where mothers marry their sons, fathers their daughters, and filial duty is enhanced by the double tie."—Ovid, *Met.*, x. 331.

[2] "Therefore nothing is any longer ours; what I call ours is artificial."

[3] Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrr. Hypo.*, iii. 24.

up in themselves, and as it were in their own marrow, the bodies and relics of their fathers; and in some sort vivifying and regenerating them by transmutation into their living flesh, by means of nourishment and digestion: it is easy to consider what a cruelty and abomination it must have appeared to men possessed and embued with this superstition, to throw their father's remains to the corruption of the earth and the nourishment of beasts and worms.

Lycurgus considered in theft the vivacity, diligence, boldness, and dexterity of purloining anything from our neighbours, and the utility that redounded to the public that every one should look more narrowly to the conservation of what was his own; and believed that from this double institution of assailing and defending advantage was to be made for military discipline (which was the principal science and virtue to which he would inure that nation) of greater consideration than the disorder and injustice of taking another man's goods.

Dionysius the tyrant offered Plato a robe of the Persian fashion, long, damasked, and perfumed; Plato refused it, saying that, being born a man, he would not willingly dress himself in woman's clothes; but Aristippus accepted it, with this answer, that no accoutrement could corrupt a chaste courage.[1] His friends reproaching him with meanness of spirit, for laying it no more to heart that Dionysius had spit in his face: "Fishermen," said he, "suffer themselves to be dashed with the waves of the sea from head to foot to catch a gudgeon."[2] Diogenes was washing cabbages, and seeing him pass by: "If thou couldst live on cabbage," said he, "thou wouldst not fawn upon a tyrant," to whom Aristippus

[1] Diogenes Laertius, ii. 78. [2] Idem, 67.

replied: "And if thou knewest how to live amongst men, thou wouldst not be washing cabbages."[1] Thus reason finds appearance for divers effects: 'tis a pot with two ears that a man may take by the right or left:—

> "Bellum, o terra hospita, portas:
> Bello armantur equi; bellum hæc armenta minantur.
> Sed tamen idem olim curru succedere sueti
> Quadrupedes, et frena jugo concordia ferre,
> Spes est pacis."[2]

Solon, being importuned by his friends not to shed powerless and unprofitable tears for the death of his son: "It is for that reason that I the more justly shed them," said he, "because they are powerless and unprofitable."[3] Socrates' wife exasperated her grief by this circumstance; "Oh, how unjustly do these wicked judges put him to death!" "Why," replied he, "hadst thou rather they should justly execute me?"[4] We have our ears bored; the Greeks looked upon that as a mark of slavery.[5] We retire in private to enjoy our wives; the Indians do it in public.[6] The Scythians immolated strangers in their temples; elsewhere temples were a refuge[7]:—

> "Inde furor vulgi, quod numina vicinorum
> Odit quisque locus, cum solos credat habendos
> Esse deos, quos ipse colit."[8]

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[1] Diogenes Laertius, ii. 68.

[2] "War, O foreign land, thou bringest us; horses are armed for war, these herds threaten war: and yet these animals having long with patience borne the yoke and yielded to the reins before, there is hope of peace."—*Æneid*, iii. 539.

[3] Diogenes Laertius, i. 63.

[4] Idem, ii. 35.

[5] Sextus Empiricus, iii. 24; Plutarch, *Life of Cicero*, c. 26.

[6] Idem, i. 14, iii. 24.

[7] Idem, *ibid.*

[8] "Thence the popular fury, that every locality hates its neighbours' gods, when it believes only the gods which it worships itself."—Juvenal, xv. 371.

I have heard of a judge who, where he met with a sharp conflict betwixt Bartolus and Baldus,[1] and some point discussed with many contrarieties, wrote in the margin of his note-book: "A question for a friend," that is to say that truth was there so controverted and confused that in a like cause he might favour which of the parties he thought fit. 'Twas only for want of wit that he did not write, "A question for a friend" throughout; the advocates and judges of our time find bias enough in all causes to accommodate them to what they themselves think fit. In so infinite a science, depending upon the authority of so many opinions, and so arbitrary a subject, it cannot but be that an extreme confusion of judgments must arise. There is hardly any suit so clear wherein opinions do not very much differ; what one court has determined, another determines quite contrary, and itself also contrary at another time. By this licence, which is a marvellous blemish on the ceremonious authority and lustre of our justice, we see frequent examples of persons not abiding by decrees, but running from judge to judge, and court to court, to decide one and the same cause.

As to the liberty of philosophical opinions concerning vice and virtue, 'tis not necessary to be expatiated upon, as therein are found many opinions that are better concealed than published to weak minds. Arcesilaus said,[2] that in fornication it was no matter how or with whom it was committed:—

"Et obscænas voluptates, si natura requirit, non genere, aut loco, aut ordine, sed formâ, ætate, figurâ, metiendas Epicurus

[1] Two eminent jurisconsults, whose names recur.
[2] Plutarch, *Rules and Measures of Health*, c. 5.

putat[1] . . . ne amores quidem sanctos a sapiente alienos esse arbitrantur[2] . . . quæramus, ad quam usque ætatem juvenes amandi sint."

These two last Stoical quotations, and the reproach that Dicæarchus threw in the teeth of Plato himself upon this account, shew how much the soundest philosophy indulges licence and excess, very remote from common usage.

Laws derive their authority from possession and use: 'tis dangerous to trace them back to their beginning; they grow great and ennoble themselves, like our rivers, by running; follow them upward to their source, 'tis but a little spring, scarce discernible, that swells thus, and thus fortifies itself by growing old. Do but consult the ancient considerations that gave the first motion to this famous torrent, so full of dignity, awe and reverence; you will find them so light and weak that it is no wonder if these people, who weigh and reduce everything to reason, and who admit nothing by authority or upon trust, have their judgments very remote and differing from those of the public. It is no wonder, if people, who take their pattern from the first image of nature, should, in most of their opinions, swerve from the common path: as, for example, few amongst them would have approved of the strict conditions of our marriages, and most of them have been for having women in common, and without obligation: they would refuse our ceremonies. Chrysippus[3] said that a philosopher

[1] "And obscene pleasures, if nature requires, Epicurus thinks are not to be measured either by kind, place, or order, but by age and beauty. Neither are holy loves thought to be interdicted to the wise man—we are to inquire till what age young men are to be loved." —Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, v. 33; Idem, *De Finib.*, iii. 20; Seneca, *Ep.*, 123.

[2] Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, iv. 34.

[3] Plutarch, *Contradictions of the Stoic Philosophers*, c. 31.

will make a dozen somersaults without his breeches for a dozen of olives; he would hardly have advised Callisthenes to have refused to Hippoclides[1] the fair Agarista his daughter, for having seen him stand on his head upon a table. Metrocles let wind a little indiscreetly in disputation in the presence of his school, and kept himself hid in his own house for shame, till Crates coming to visit him, and adding to his consolations and reasons the example of his own liberty, falling to let wind with him who should let most, cured him of that scruple, and withal drew him to his own Stoical sect, more free than that more reserved one of the Peripatetics, of which he had been till then.[2] That which we call decency, not to dare to do that in public which it is decent enough to do in private, the Stoics call folly; and to mince it and be so modest as to conceal and disown what nature, custom, and our desires publish and proclaim of our actions, they reputed a vice; but the others thought it was to undervalue the mysteries of Venus, to draw them out of her private temples to expose them to the view of the people, and that to bring them out from behind the curtain was to lose them. Modesty is a thing of weight; secrecy, reserve, circumspection are parts of esteem: that pleasure does very rightly when, under the visor of virtue, she desires not to be prostituted in the open streets, trodden under foot and exposed to the public view, wanting the dignity and convenience of her private cabinets. Hence some say that to put down public stews is not only to disperse fornication into all places that was assigned to one, but moreover by the very difficulty to incite idlers to this vice:—

[1] Herodotus, vi. 129.
[2] Diogenes Laertius, vi. 94.

"Mæchus es Aufidiæ, qui vir, Scævine, fuisti;
Rivalis fuerat qui tuus, ille vir est.
Cur aliena placet tibi, quæ tua non placet uxor?
Nunquid securus non potes arrigere?"[1]

This experience diversifies itself in a thousand examples:—

"Nullus in urbe fuit totâ, qui tangere vellet
Uxorem gratis, Cæciliane, tuam,
Dum licuit: sed nunc, positis custodibus, ingens
Turba fututorum est. Ingeniosus homo es."[2]

A philosopher[3] being taken in the very act, and asked what he was doing, coolly replied, "I am planting a man": no more blushing to be so caught than if they had found him planting garlic.

It is, I suppose, out of tenderness and respect to the natural modesty of mankind that a great and religious author[4] is of opinion that this act is so necessarily bound to privacy and shame that he cannot persuade himself there could be any absolute performance in those impudent embraces of the Cynics, but that they only made it their business to represent lascivious gestures to maintain the impudence of their schools' profession; and that to eject what shame had withheld it was afterwards necessary for them to withdraw into the shade. But he had not thoroughly examined their debauches: for Diogenes, playing the beast with himself in public, wished in the presence of all who

[1] "Thou, Schævinus, once Aufidia's husband, art now her gallant. He who was once your rival is now her husband. How is it that she who now pleases thee, being another's, did not please thee when thou wert her husband? Cannot you find your vigour where you are unmolested?"—Martial, iii. 70.

[2] "Not a man in the whole city, Cæcilianus, would touch your wife gratis, while it was easy to do so: now that you have set guards upon her, there's a vast crowd of lovers after her. You are a clever man."—Martial, i. 74.

[3] Diogenes the Cynic.

[4] St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, xiv. 20.

saw him that he could fill his belly by that exercise.[1] To those who asked him why he did not find out a more commodious place to eat in than the open street, he made answer, "Because I am hungry in the open street."[2] The women philosophers who mixed with their sect, mixed also with their persons in all places without reservation: and Hipparchia was not received into Crates' society but upon conditions that she should in all things follow the uses and customs of his rule.[3] These philosophers set a great price upon virtue, and renounced all other discipline but the moral: and yet in all their actions they attributed the sovereign authority to the election of their sage as above the laws, and gave no other curb to voluptuousness but moderation only, and the conservation of the liberty of others.

Heraclitus and Protagoras,[4] forasmuch as wine seemed bitter to the sick and pleasant to the sound; the rudder crooked in the water and straight when out, and such like contrary appearances as are found in subjects, thence argued that all subjects had in themselves the causes of these appearances; and that there was some bitterness in the wine which had sympathy with the sick man's taste, and the rudder some bending quality, sympathising with him who looks upon it in the water, and so of all the rest; which is as much as to say that all is in all things, and, consequently, nothing in any one, for where all is, there is nothing.

This opinion put me in mind of the experience we have, that there is no sense nor aspect of anything, whether bitter or sweet, straight or crooked, that human wit does not find out in the writings it undertakes to rummage over. Into the

[1] Diogenes Laertius, vi. 69.
[2] Idem, vii. 58.
[3] Idem, vi. 96.
[4] Sextus Empiricus, i. 29.

simplest, purest, and most perfect speaking that can possibly be, how many lies and falsities have we suggested? What heresy has not there found ground and testimony sufficient to set forth and defend itself? 'Tis on this account that the authors of such errors will never surrender this proof of the testimony of the interpretation of words. A person of dignity who would prove to me by authority the search of the philosopher's stone wherein he was over head and ears engaged, alleged to me the other day five or six passages in the Bible upon which he said he first founded his attempt, for the discharge of his conscience (for he is a divine); and in truth the invention was not only amusing, but, moreover, very well accommodated to the defence of this fine science.

By this way the reputation of divining fables is acquired; there is no fortune-teller, if he have but this authority that people will condescend to turn over and curiously peep into all the folds and glosses of his words, but we may make him, like the Sybils, say what we will. There are so many ways of interpretation that it will be hard but that, either obliquely or in a direct line, an ingenious wit will find out in every subject some air that will serve for his purpose: therefore 'tis we find a cloudy and ambitious style in so frequent and ancient use. Let the author but contrive to attract and busy posterity about his predictions; which not only his own parts, but as much or more the accidental favour of the matter itself, may effect; that, as to the rest, he express himself foolishly or subtlely, somewhat obscurely and contradictorily, 'tis no matter: a number of wits, shaking and sifting him, will bring out a great many several forms, either according to his own,

or collateral, or contrary to it, which will all redound to his honour: he will see himself enriched, by the means of his disciples, like the regents of colleges by their pupils at Landy.[1] This is it which has given reputation to many things of no worth at all; that has brought several writings into vogue, and given them the fame of containing all sorts of matter that can be desired; one and the same thing receiving a thousand and a thousand images and various considerations, even as many as we please.

Is it possible that Homer could design to say all that they make him say, and that he devised so many and so various figures as that divines, lawgivers, captains, philosophers, all sorts of men who treat of sciences, how variously and oppositely soever, should cite him, and support their arguments by his authority, as the sovereign master of all offices, works, and artisans; counsellor-general of all enterprises? Whoever has had occasion for oracles and predictions has there found sufficient to serve his turn. 'Tis wonderful how many and how admirable concurrences an intelligent person and a particular friend of mine has there found out in favour of our religion, and he cannot easily be put out of the conceit that this was Homer's design: and yet he is as well acquainted with that author as any man whatever of our time; and so what he has found out there in favour of our religion, many anciently found there in favour of theirs. Do but observe how Plato is tumbled and tossed about: every one ennobling his own opinions by applying him to himself, makes him

[1] A present which the scholars gave their master at the Fair of Landy, held yearly at St. Denis, by institution of King Dagobert in 629.

take what side he pleases; they draw him in and engage him in all the new opinions the world receives, and make him, according to the different course of things, differ from himself; they make him, according to their sense, disavow the manners and customs lawful in his age, because they are unlawful in ours: and all this with vivacity and power, according to the force and sprightliness of the wit of the interpreter. From the same foundation that Heraclitus and this sentence of his had, "that all things have in them those forms that we discern in them," Democritus drew a quite contrary conclusion—namely, "that subjects had nothing at all in them of what we there find"; and, forasmuch as honey is sweet to one and bitter to another, he thence argued that it was neither sweet nor bitter. The Pyrrhonians would say that they know not whether it is sweet or bitter, or neither the one nor the other, or both; for these always gain the highest point of dubitation. The Cyrenaics held that nothing was perceptible from without, and that that only was perceptible which internally touched us, as grief and pleasure; acknowledging neither tone nor colour, but certain affections only that we receive from them, and that man's judgment had no other seat. Protagoras believed that "what seemed to every one was true to every one." The Epicureans lodged all judgment in the senses, both in the knowledge of things and in pleasure. Plato would have the judgment of truth, and truth itself, derived from opinions and the senses, appertain to the mind and cogitation.

This discourse has put me upon the consideration of the senses, in which lie the greatest foundation and proof of our ignorance. Whatsoever is known is doubtless known by the faculty of the knower;

for seeing the judgment proceeds from the operation of him who judges, 'tis reason that he perform this operation by his means and will, not by the constraint of another, as would happen if we knew things by the power and according to the law of their essence. Now all knowledge is conveyed to us by the senses; they are our masters:—

> "Via qua munita fidei
> Proxima fert humanum in pectus, templaque mentis"[1]:

science begins by them, and is resolved into them. After all, we should know no more than a stone, if we did not know that there is sound, odour, light, taste, measure, weight, softness, hardness, sharpness, colour, smoothness, breadth, and depth; these are the platform and principles of all the structure of our knowledge, and, according to some, science is nothing else but sensation. He that could make me contradict the senses would have me by the throat, he could not make me go further back; the senses are the beginning and the end of human knowledge:—

> "Invenies primis ab sensibus esse creatam
> Notitiam veri; neque sensus posse refelli . . .
> Quid majore fide porro, quam sensus, haberi
> Debet?"[2]

Attribute to them the least we can, we must still of necessity grant them this, that it is by their means and mediation that all our instruction is directed. Cicero says,[3] that Chrysippus, having

[1] "It is the path by which faith finds its way to enter the human heart and the temple of the mind."—Lucretius, v. 103.

[2] "You will find that all knowledge of truth is first conveyed to the soul by the senses. The senses cannot be disputed. What can be held in greater faith than them?"—Idem, iv. 279, 483.

[3] *Acad.*, ii. 27.

attempted to depreciate the force and virtue of the senses, presented to himself arguments and so vehement oppositions to the contrary, that he could not satisfy them; whereupon Carneades, who maintained the contrary side, boasted that he would make use of the same words and arguments that Chrysippus had done wherewith to controvert him, and therefore thus cried out against him: "O miserable! thy force has destroyed thee."[1] There can, in our estimate, be nothing absurd to a greater degree than to maintain that fire does not warm, that light does not shine, and that there is no weight nor solidity in iron, which are knowledges conveyed to us by the senses; there is no belief or knowledge in man that can be compared to that for certainty.

The first consideration I have upon the subject of the senses is, that I make a doubt whether man is furnished with all natural senses. I see several animals that live an entire and perfect life, some without sight, others without hearing: who knows whether to us also one, two, or three, or many other senses, may not be wanting? For if any one be wanting, our examination cannot discover the defect. 'Tis the privilege of the senses to be the utmost limit of our discovery; there is nothing beyond them that can assist us in exploration, not so much as one sense in the discovery of another:—

> "An poterunt oculos aures reprehendere? an aures
> Tactus? an hunc porro tactum sapor arguet oris?
> An confutabunt nares, oculive revincent?"[2]

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[1] Plutarch, *Contradictions of the Stoic Philosophers.*

[2] "Can ears correct the eyes, or eyes the touch, or can touch be checked by tasting; or can nose or eyes confute other faculties?"—Lucretius, iv. 487.

they all constitute the extremest limits of our ability:—

"Seorsum quique potestas
Divisa est, sua vis cuique est."[1]

It is impossible to make a man, naturally blind, conceive that he does not see; impossible to make him desire sight, or to regret his defect: for which reason we ought not to derive any assurance from the soul's being contented and satisfied with those we have, considering that it cannot be sensible herein of its infirmity and imperfection, if there be any such thing. It is impossible to say anything to this blind man, either by argument or similitude, that can possess his imagination with any apprehension of light, colour, or sight; nothing remains behind that can push on the senses to evidence. Those that are born blind, whom we hear to wish they could see, it is not that they understand what they desire: they have learned from us that they want something, that there is something to be desired that we have which they can name indeed, and speak of its effects and consequence; but yet they know not what it is, nor at all apprehend it.

I have seen a gentleman of a good family who was born blind, or at least blind from such an age that he knows not what sight is, who is so little sensible of his defect that he makes use, as we do, of words proper for seeing, and applies them after a manner wholly special and his own. They brought him a child to whom he was godfather; having taken him into his arms: "Good God," said he, "what a fine child is this: how beautiful to look upon, what a pleasant face he has!" He

[1] "Each has its own special power assigned to it, and its strength is its own."—Lucretius, iv. 490.

will say, like one of us, "This room has a very fine prospect; it is clear weather; the sun shines bright"; and, moreover, hunting, tennis, and butts being our exercises, as he has heard, he has taken a liking to them, makes them his exercises, and believes he has as good a share of the sport as we have; and will express himself as angry or pleased as the best of us all, and yet knows nothing of it but by the ear. One cries out to him, "Here's a hare," when he is upon some even plain where he may safely ride; and afterwards, when they tell him the hare is killed, he will be as proud of it as he hears others say they are. He will take a tennis-ball in his left hand and strike it away with the racket: he will shoot with a musket at random, and is contented with what his people tell him, that he is over or beside the mark.

Who knows whether all human kind commit not the like absurdity, for want of some sense, and that through this default the greatest part of the face of things is concealed from us? What do we know but that the difficulties which we find in several works of nature do not thence proceed? and that several effects of animals, which exceed our capacity, are not produced by the faculty of some sense that we are defective in? and whether some of them have not by this means a life more full and entire than ours? We seize an apple as it were with all our senses: we there find redness, smoothness, odour, and sweetness: but it may have other virtues besides these, as drying up or binding, to which no sense of ours can have any reference.[1] Is it not likely that there are sentient faculties in nature that are fit to judge and discern what we

[1] All this is taken from Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrh. Hypot.*, i. 14.

call the occult properties in several things, as for the loadstone to attract iron; and that the want of such faculties is the cause that we are ignorant of the true essence of such things? 'Tis, peradventure, some particular sense that gives cocks to understand what hour it is at midnight and when it grows to be towards day, and that makes them crow accordingly; that teaches chickens, before they have any experience of what they are, to fear a sparrow-hawk, and not a goose or a peacock, though birds of a much larger size; that cautions them of the hostile quality the cat has against them, and makes them not fear a dog; to arm themselves against the mewing, a kind of flattering voice, of the one, and not against the barking, a shrill and threatening voice, of the other; that teaches wasps, ants, and rats to select the best pear and the best cheese, before they have tasted them, and which inspires the stag, the elephant, the serpent, with the knowledge of a certain herb proper for their cure. There is no sense that has not a mighty dominion, and that does not by its power introduce an infinite number of knowledges. If we were defective in the intelligence of sounds, of harmony, and of the voice, it would cause an unimaginable confusion in all the rest of our science; for, besides what appertains to the proper effect of every sense, how many arguments, consequences, and conclusions do we draw as to other things, by comparing one sense with another? Let an understanding man imagine human nature originally produced without the sense of seeing, and consider what ignorance and trouble such a defect would bring upon him, what a darkness and blindness in the soul; he will see by that of how great

importance to the knowledge of truth the privation of such another sense, or of two, or three, should we be so deprived, would be. We have formed a truth by the consultation and concurrence of our five senses; but, peradventure, we should have the consent and contribution of eight or ten, to make certain discovery of it in its essence.

The sects that controvert the knowledge of man, do it principally by the uncertainty and weakness of our senses; for since all knowledge is by their means and mediation conveyed unto us, if they fail in their report, if they corrupt or alter what they bring us from without, if the light which by them creeps into the soul be obscured in the passage, we have nothing else to hold by. From this extreme difficulty all these fancies proceed; "that every subject has in itself all we there find: that it has nothing in it, of what we think we there find"; and that of the Epicureans, "that the sun is no bigger than 'tis judged by our sight to be":—

> "Quidquid id est, nihilo fertur majore figurâ,
> Quam, nostris oculis quam cernimus, esse videtur"[1];

"that the appearances, which represent a body great to him that is near, and less to him that is more remote, are both true":—

> "Nec tamen hic oculos falli concedimus hilum—
> Proinde animi vitium hoc oculis adfingere noli"[2];

and resolutely, "that there is no deceit in the senses; that we are to lie at their mercy, and seek elsewhere reasons to excuse the difference

[1] "But be it what it will, in our esteem, it is no bigger than it seems to our eyes."—Lucretius, v. 577.

[2] "Yet we deny that the eye is deluded; do not then charge it with the mind's fault."—Idem, iv. 380, 387.

and contradictions we there find, even to the inventing of lies and other flams (they go that length) rather than accuse the senses." Timagoras vowed that, by pressing or turning his eye, he could never perceive the light of the candle to double, and that the seeming so proceeded from the vice of opinion, and not from the organ. The most absurd of all absurdities, according to the Epicureans, is in denying the force and effect of the senses :—

> "Proinde, quod in quoque est his visum tempore, verum est.
> Et, si non poterit ratio dissolvere causam,
> Cur ea, quæ fuerint juxtim quadrata, procul sint
> Visa rotunda ; tamen præstat rationis egentem
> Reddere mendose causas utriusque figuræ,
> Quam manibus manifesta suis emittere quoquam,
> Et violare fidem primam, et convellere tota
> Fundamenta, quibus nixatur vita, salusque :
> Non modo enim ratio ruat omnis, vita quoque ipsa
> Concidat extemplo, nisi credere sensibus ausis,
> Præcipitesque locos vitare, et cætera, quæ sint
> In genere hoc fugienda." [1]

This so desperate and unphilosophical advice, expresses only this, that human knowledge cannot support itself but by reason that is unreasonable, foolish, and mad ; but that it is better that man, to set a greater value upon himself, should make use of this or any other remedy how fantastic soever, than confess his necessary ignorance ; a truth so disadvantageous to him. He cannot avoid owning that the senses are the sovereign lords of

[1] "Therefore, whatever has to them at any time seemed true, is true, and if our reason cannot explain why things seem to be square when near, and at a greater distance appear round, 'tis better for him that's at fault in reasoning to give of each figure a false cause, than to permit manifest things to go out of his hands, to give the lie to his first belief, and overthrow all the foundations on which life and safety depend ; for not alone reason, but life itself will fall together with sudden ruin, unless we dare trust our senses to avoid precipices, and other such like dangers that are to be avoided."—Lucretius, iv. 500.

his knowledge; but they are uncertain and falsifiable in all circumstances; 'tis there that he is to fight it out to the last; and if his just forces fail him, as they do, supply that defect with obstinacy, temerity, and impudence. If what the Epicureans say be true, viz., "that we have no knowledge if the appearances of the senses be false"; and if that also be true which the Stoics say, "that the appearances of the senses are so false that they can furnish us with no manner of knowledge," we shall conclude, to the disadvantage of these two great dogmatical sects, that there is no science at all.

As to what concerns the error and uncertainty of the operation of the senses, every one may furnish himself with as many examples as he pleases; so ordinary are the faults and tricks they put upon us. In the echo of a valley the sound of the trumpet seems to meet us, which comes from some place behind:—

> "Exstantesque procul medio de gurgite montes,
> Classibus inter quos liber patet exitus, iidem
> Apparent, et longe divolsi licet, ingens
> Insula conjunctis tamen ex his una videtur . . .
> Et fugere ad puppim colles campique videntur,
> Quos agimus præter navim, velisque volamus . . .
> Denique, ubi in medio nobis equus acer obhæsit.
> Flumine, et in rapidas amnis despeximus undas;
> Stantis equi corpus transversum ferre videtur
> Vis, et in adversum flumen contrudere raptim"[1]:

just as a musket bullet under the forefinger, the middle finger being lapped over it, feels so like

[1] "And mountains rising up at a distance from the middle of the sea, between which a free passage for ships is open, yet appear, though far separated, one vast island united of the two, . . . and the hills and plains, past which we row or sail, seem to flee away astern. When a spirited horse sticks fast with us in the middle of a river, and we look down into the stream, the horse seems to be carried by its force in a contrary direction, though he stands still."—Lucretius, iv. 396, 388, 419. The quotations are not consecutive.

two that a man will have much ado to persuade himself there is but one, the senses so vividly representing them as two. For that the senses are very often masters of our reason and constrain it to receive impressions which it judges and knows to be false, is frequently seen. I set aside the sense of feeling, that has its functions nearer, more vivid and substantial, that so often by the effect of the pains it inflicts on the body subverts and overthrows all those fine Stoical resolutions, and compels him to cry out from his belly who has resolutely established this doctrine in his soul, "that the gout and all other pains and diseases are indifferent things, not having the power to abate anything of the sovereign felicity wherein the sage is seated by his virtue"; there is no heart so effeminate that the rattle and sound of our drums and trumpets will not enflame with courage; nor so sullen that the sweetness of music will not rouse and cheer; nor a soul so stubborn that will not feel itself struck with some reverence in considering the sombre vastness of our churches, the variety of ornaments and order of our ceremonies, and in hearing the solemn music of our organs, and the grace and devout harmony of our voices; even those, who come in with contempt, feel a certain shivering in their hearts, and something of dread that makes them begin to doubt their opinion. For my part, I do not find myself strong enough to hear an ode of Horace or Catullus sung by a beautiful young mouth without emotion; and Zeno[1] had reason to say that the voice is the flower of beauty. Some one once wanted to make me believe that a certain person, whom all we Frenchmen know, had imposed upon me in repeating some verses

[1] Diogenes Laertius, iv. 23.

that he had made; that they were not the same upon the paper that they were in the air, and that my eyes would make a contrary judgment of them to my ears: so great a power has pronunciation to give fashion and value to works that are left to the efficacy and modulation of the voice. Therefore Philoxenus was not so much to blame who, hearing one give an ill accent to some composition of his, stamped on and broke certain earthen vessels of his, saying, "I break what is thine, because thou spoilest what is mine."[1] To what end did those men, who have with a positive resolution destroyed themselves, turn away their faces that they might not see the blow that was by themselves appointed? and that those who, for their health, desire and command incisions and cauteries, cannot endure the sight of the preparations, instruments, and operations of the surgeons, seeing that the sight is not in any way to participate in the pain?—are not these proper examples to verify the authority the senses have over the reason? 'Tis to much purpose that we know these tresses were borrowed from a page or a lacquey; that this red came from Spain, and that white and polish from the ocean; our sight will nevertheless compel us to confess the object more agreeable and more lovely against all reason; for in this there is nothing of its own.

"Auferimur cultu; gemmis auroque teguntur
Omnia; pars minima est ipsa puella sui.
Sæpe, ubi sit quod ames, inter tam multa requiras;
Decipit hac oculos ægide dives amor."[2]

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[1] Diogenes Laertius, iv. 36.

[2] "We are carried away by dress; all things are hidden by jewels and gold; the girl is of herself the smallest part. Often, when amongst so many decorations we seek for her we love, wealthy love deceives our eyes with this mask."—Ovid, *De Remedio Amor.*, 343.

What a strange power do the poets attribute to the senses, who make Narcissus so desperately in love with his own shadow?—

"Cunctaque miratur, quibus est mirabilis ipse;
Se cupit imprudens, et, qui probat, ipse probatur;
Dumque petit, petitur: pariterque accendit, et ardet"[1]:

and Pygmalion's judgment so troubled by the impression of the sight of his ivory statue, that he loves and adores it, as if it were a living woman:—

"Oscula dat, reddique putat; loquiturque, tenetque,
Et credit tactis digitos insidere membris;
Et metuit, pressos veniat ne livor in artus."[2]

Let a philosopher be put into a cage of small thin-set bars of iron, and hang him on the top of the high tower of Nôtre Dame of Paris; he will see, by manifest reason, that he cannot possibly fall, and yet he will find, unless he have been used to the tiler's trade, that he cannot help but that the excessive height will frighten and astound him; for we have enough to do to assure ourselves in the galleries of our steeples, if they are railed with an open baluster, although they are of stone; and some there are that cannot endure so much as to think of it. Let there be a beam thrown over betwixt these two towers, of breadth sufficient to walk upon; there is no philosophical wisdom so firm that can give us the courage to walk over it, as we should do upon the ground. I have often tried this upon our mountains in these parts, and though I am not one who am much subject to be

[1] "He admires all things by which he is admired: silly fellow, he desires himself; the praises which he gives, he claims; he seeks, and is sought; he is inflamed and inflames."—Ovid, *Met.*, iii. 424.

[2] "He kisses, and believes that he is kissed again, seizes her, embraces her; he thinks her limbs yield to the pressure of his fingers, and fears lest they should become black and blue with his ardour."—Ovid, *Met.*, x. 256.

afraid of such things, yet I was not able to endure to look into that infinite depth without horror and trembling in legs and arms, though I stood above my length from the edge of the precipice, and could not have fallen down unless I had chosen. I also observed that what height soever the precipice were, provided there were some tree or some jutting out of a rock a little to support and divide the sight, it a little eases our fears and gives some assurance, as if they were things by which in falling we might have some help; but that direct precipices we are not able to look upon without being giddy:—

"Ut despici sine vertigine simul oculorum animique non possit"[1]:

which is a manifest imposture of the sight. And therefore it was, that the fine philosopher[2] put out his own eyes to free the soul from being diverted by them, and that he might philosophise at greater liberty: but by the same rule, he should have stopped up his ears, which Theophrastus says are the most dangerous instruments about us for receiving violent impressions to alter and disturb us; and, in short, should have deprived himself of all his other senses, that is to say, of his life and being; for they have all the power to command our soul and reason:—

"Fit etiam sæpe specie quâdam, sæpe vocum gravitate et cantibus, ut pellantur animi vehementius: sæpe etiam curâ et timore."[3]

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[1] "Not to be seen without dizziness to the eyes and mind."—Livy, xliv. 6.

[2] Democritus, in Cicero, *De Finibus*, v. 29. But Cicero only spoke of it as of a thing uncertain; and Plutarch says positively that it is a falsehood. See his *Discourse of Curiosity*, xi.

[3] "For it often falls out that minds are more vehemently struck by some sight, by the loud sound of the voice, or by singing, and ofttimes by grief and fear."—Cicero, *De Divin.*, i. 37.

Physicians hold that there are certain complexions that are agitated by some sounds and instruments even to fury. I have seen some who could not hear a bone gnawed under the table without impatience; and there is scarce any man who is not disturbed at the sharp and shrill noise that the file makes in grating upon the iron; and so, to hear chewing near them or to hear any one speak who has any impediment in the throat or nose, will move some people even to anger and hatred. Of what use was that piping prompter of Gracchus, who softened, raised, and moved his master's voice whilst he declaimed at Rome, if the movements and quality of the sound had not the power to move and alter the judgments of the auditory? Truly, there is wonderful reason to keep such a clutter about the firmness of this fine piece that suffers itself to be turned and twined by the motions and accidents of so light a wind!

The same cheat that the senses put upon our understanding, they have in turn put upon them; the soul also sometimes has its revenge; they lie and contend which should most deceive one another. What we see and hear when we are transported with passion, we neither see nor hear as it is:—

"Et solem geminum, et duplices se ostendere Thebas"[1]:

the object that we love appears to us more beautiful than it really is:—

"Multimodis igitur pravas turpesque videmus
Esse in deliciis, summoque in honore vigere"[2]:

and that we hate, more ugly. To a discontented and afflicted man, the light of day seems dark and

[1] "The sun seemed two suns, and Thebes a double city."—*Æneid*, iv. 470.

[2] "We often see the ugly and the vile held in highest honour and warmest love."—Lucretius, iv. 1152.

overcast. Our senses are not only corrupted, but very often utterly stupefied by the passions of the soul; how many things do we see that we do not take notice of, if the mind be occupied with other thoughts?—

> "In rebus quoque apertis noscere possis,
> Sinon advertas animum, proinde esse, quasi omni
> Tempore semotum fuerit, longeque remotum"[1];

it seems as though the soul retires within and amuses the powers of the senses. And so both the inside and the outside of man is full of infirmities and falsehood.

They who have compared our life to a dream were, peradventure, more in the right than they were aware of. When we dream, the soul lives, works, exercises all its faculties, neither more nor less than when awake; but if more gently and obscurely, yet not so much certainly, that the difference should be as great as betwixt night and the meridional brightness of the sun; nay, as betwixt night and shade; there she sleeps, here she slumbers, but whether more or less, 'tis still dark and Cimmerian darkness. We wake sleeping, and sleep waking. I do not see so clearly in my sleep; but as to my being awake, I never find it clear enough and free from clouds: moreover, sleep, when it is profound, sometimes rocks even dreams themselves asleep; but our awaking is never so sprightly that it rightly and thoroughly purges and dissipates those reveries which are waking dreams, and worse than dreams. Our reason and soul receiving those fancies and opinions that come in dreams, and authorising the actions of our dreams,

[1] "Nay, as to the most distinct objects, you may observe that unless the mind take notice of them, they are no more seen than if they were far removed in time and distance."—Lucretius, iv. 812.

in like manner as they do those of the day, why do we not doubt whether our thought and action is not another sort of dreaming, and our waking a certain kind of sleep?

If the senses be our first judges, it is not our own that we are alone to consult; for in this faculty beasts have as great or greater, right than we: it is certain that some of them have the sense of hearing more quick than man, others that of seeing, others that of feeling, others that of touch and taste. Democritus said,[1] that the gods and brutes had the sensitive faculties much more perfect than man. Now, betwixt the effects of their senses and ours, the difference is extreme; our spittle cleanses and dries up our wounds; it kills the serpent:—

> "Tantaque in his rebus distantia, differitasque est,
> Ut quod aliis cibus est, aliis fuat acre venenum.
> Est itaque, ut serpens, hominis quæ tacta salivis,
> Disperit, ac sese mandendo conficit ipsa."[2]

What quality do we attribute to our spittle, either in respect to ourselves or to the serpent? by which of the two senses shall we prove the true essence that we seek? Pliny says,[3] that there are certain sea-hares in the Indies that are poison to us, and we to them, insomuch that with the least touch we kill them: which shall be truly poison, the man or the fish? which shall we believe, the fish of the man, or the man of the fish? One quality of the air infects a man that does the ox no harm; some other infects the ox but hurts not the man: which of the two shall in truth and nature be the pestilent

[1] Plutarch, *On the Opinions of the Philosophers*, iv. 10.

[2] "And in those things the difference is so great that what is one man's poison is another man's meat; for the serpent often, when touched with human spittle, goes mad, and bites itself to death."—Lucretius, iv. 637.

[3] *Nat. Hist.*, xxxii. 1.

quality? To them who have the jaundice all things seem yellow and paler than to us:—

> "Lurida præterea fiunt, quæcunque tuentur
> Arquati."[1]

They who are troubled with the disease that the physicians call hyposphagma, which is a suffusion of blood under the skin, see all things red and bloody.[2] What do we know but that these humours, which thus alter the operations of sight, predominate in beasts and are usual with them? for we see some whose eyes are yellow like our people who have the jaundice, and others of a bloody colour; to these 'tis likely that the colour of objects seems other than to us; which judgment of the two shall be right? for it is not said that the essence of things has a relation to man only: hardness, whiteness, depth, and sharpness have reference to the service and knowledge of animals as well as to us, and Nature has equally designed them for their use. When we press down the eye, the body that we look upon we perceive to be longer and more extended; many beasts have their eyes so pressed down: this length therefore is, peradventure, the true form of that body, and not that which our eyes give it in their usual state. If we close the lower part of the eye, things appear double to us:—

> "Bina lucernarum florentia lumina flammis,
> Et duplices hominum facies et corpora bina."[3]

If our ears be obstructed or the passage stopped with anything, we receive the sound quite otherwise

[1] "Whatever jaundiced eyes view looks yellow."—Lucretius, iv. 333.

[2] Sextus Empiricus, i. 14. *Hyposphagma* is more usually defined to be a suffusion on the eye from the effect of a blow.

[3] "Two lights in the lamps seem blossoming with flames, and each man appears to have a double body and two heads."—Lucretius, iv. 451.

than we usually do[1]; the animals likewise, who have either the ears hairy or but a very little hole instead of an ear, do not, consequently, hear as we do, but another kind of sound. We see at festivals and theatres that painted glass of a certain colour reflecting the light of the flambeaux, and all things in the room appear to us green, yellow, or violet:—

> "Et vulgò faciunt id lutea russaque vela,
> Et ferrugina, cum, magnis intenta theatris,
> Per malos vulgata trabesque, trementia fluctant:
> Namque ibi consessum caveai subter, et omnem
> Scenalem, speciem, patrum, matrumque, deorumque
> Inficiunt, coguntque suo fluitare colore"[2]:

'tis likely that the eyes of animals, which we see to be of divers colours, produce the appearance of bodies to them the same with their eyes.

We should, therefore, to make a right judgment of the operations of the senses, be first agreed with beasts; and secondly, amongst ourselves, which we by no means are, but enter at every turn into dispute, seeing that one man hears, sees, or tastes something otherwise than another does; and contest as much as upon any other thing about the diversity of the images that the senses represent to us. A child, by the ordinary rule of nature, hears, sees, and tastes otherwise than a man of thirty years old, and he than one of threescore; the senses are in some more obscure and dusky, and in others more open and quick. We receive things variously, according as we are and according as they appear to us; now, our perception being so

[1] Sextus Empiricus, i. 14.

[2] "And thus yellow, red, and purple curtains, stretched over the spacious theatre, sustained by poles and pillars, wave about in the air, and whole streams of colours flow from the top, and tinge the scenes, and men, and women, and gods."—Lucretius, iv. 73.

uncertain and controverted, it is no wonder if we are told that we may declare that snow appears white to us, but that to affirm that it is in its own essence really so, is more than we are able to justify: and this foundation being shaken, all the knowledge in the world must of necessity fall to pieces. Then our senses themselves hinder one another: a picture seems raised and embossed to the sight, in the handling it seems flat to the touch[1]: shall we say that musk, which delights the smell and is offensive to the taste, is agreeable or no? There are herbs and unguents proper for one part of the body that are hurtful to another; honey is pleasant to the taste, but not pleasant to the sight.[2] Those rings which are cut in the form of feathers, and which they call in device *pennes sans fin*, the eye cannot determine their size, or help being deceived by the imagination that on one side they are not larger, and on the other side become gradually narrower, and this even when you have them round the finger; yet when the touch comes to test them, it finds them of equal size and alike throughout. They who, to assist their lust, were wont in ancient times to make use of magnifying glasses to represent the members they were to employ larger than they were, and by ocular tumidity to please themselves the more[3]: to which of the two senses did they give the prize, whether to the sight, that represented the members as large and great as they would desire, or to the touch, which presented them little and contemptible? Are they our senses that supply the subject with these different conditions, and have the subjects themselves

[1] Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrr. Hypo.*, i. 14.
[2] Idem, *ibid.*
[3] Seneca, *Nat. Quæst.*, i. 16.

nevertheless but one? as we see in the bread we eat, it is nothing but bread, but by being eaten it becomes bones, blood, flesh, hair, and nails:—

> "Ut cibus in membra atque artus cum diditur omnes,
> Disperit, atque aliam naturam sufficit ex se"[1];

the humidity[2] sucked up by the root of a tree, becomes trunk, leaf, and fruit; and the air, being but one, is modulated in a trumpet to a thousand sorts of sounds: are they our senses, I would fain know, that in like manner form these subjects into so many divers qualities, or have they them really such in themselves; and, in the face of this doubt, what can we determine of their true essence? Moreover, since the accidents of disease, delirium, or sleep make things appear otherwise to us than they do to the healthful, the sane, and those that are awake, is it not likely that our right posture of health and understanding, and our natural humours, have also wherewith to give a being to things that have relation to their own condition, and to accommodate them to themselves, as well as when these humours are disordered; and our health as capable of giving them its aspect of sickness? Why[3] has not the temperate a certain form of objects relative to it, as well as the intemperate; and why may it not as well stamp it with its own character as the other? He whose mouth is out of taste says the wine is flat; the healthful man commends its flavour, and the thirsty its briskness. Now, our condition always accommodating things to itself, and transforming them according to itself, we cannot know what things truly are in them-

[1] "As meats diffused through all the members lose their former nature, and become a new substance."—Lucretius, iii. 703.

[2] Sextus Empiricus, *ubi suprâ.* [3] Idem, *ubi suprâ.*

selves, seeing that nothing comes to us but what is falsified and altered by the senses. Where the compass, the square, and the rule are crooked, all proportions drawn from them, all the buildings erected by those guides, must of necessity be also defective; the uncertainty of our senses renders everything uncertain that they produce:—

> "Denique ut in fabrica, si prava est regula prima
> Normaque si fallax rectis regionibus exit,
> Et libella aliqua si ex parti claudicat hilum;
> Omnia mendose fieri atque obstipa necessum est:
> Prava, cubantia, prona, supina, atque absona tecta:
> Jam ruere ut quædam videantur velle, ruantque
> Prodita judiciis fallacibus omnia primis:
> Sic igitur ratio tibi rerum prava necesse est,
> Falsaque sit, falsis quæcumque à sensibus orta est."[1]

And, after all, who can be fit to judge of and to determine these differences? As we say, in controversies of religion, that we must have a judge neither inclining to the one side nor to the other, free from all choice and affection, which cannot be among Christians; just so it falls out in this; for if he be old, he cannot judge of the sense of old age, being himself a party in the case: if young, there is the same exception; healthful, sick, asleep, or awake, he is still the same incompetent judge: we must have someone exempt from all these qualities, so that without preoccupation of judgment, he may judge of these propositions as of things indifferent to him; and, by this rule, we must have a judge that never was.

To judge of the appearances that we receive of subjects, we ought to have a judicatory instrument; to prove this instrument, we must have demonstra-

[1] Lucretius, iv. 512. The sense is given in the preceding passage of the text.

tion; to verify this demonstration, an instrument: and here we are upon the wheel.[1] Seeing the senses cannot determine our dispute, being themselves full of uncertainty, it must be reason that must do it; but no reason can be established but upon the foundation of another reason; and so we run back to all infinity. Our fancy does not apply itself to things that are foreign, but is conceived by the mediation of the senses, and the senses do not comprehend a foreign subject, but only their own passions; so that fancy and appearance are no part of the subject, but only of the passion and sufferance of the sense; which passion and subject are several things; wherefore, whoever judges by appearances, judges by another thing than the subject. And to say that the passions of the senses convey to the soul the quality of external subjects by resemblance: how can the soul and understanding be assured of this resemblance, having of itself no communication with the external subjects? as they who never knew Socrates cannot, when they see his portrait, say it is like him. Now, whoever would, notwithstanding, judge by appearances; if it be by all, it is impossible, because they hinder one another by their contrarieties and discrepancies, as we by experience see: shall some select appearances govern the rest? You must verify these select by another select, the second by the third, and, consequently, there will never be any end on't. Finally, there is no constant existence, either of the objects' being nor of our own: both we and our judgment, and all mortal things, are evermore incessantly running and rolling, and, consequently, nothing certain can be established from the one to the other, both the

[1] "Nous voyla au rouet."

judging and the judge being in a continual motion and mutation.

We have no communication with Being, by reason that all human nature is ever in the midst, betwixt being born and dying, giving but an obscure appearance and shadow, a weak and uncertain opinion of itself, and if, peradventure, you fix your thought to apprehend your being, it would be like grasping water; for the more you clutch your hand to squeeze and hold what is in its own nature flowing, so much the more you lose what you would grasp and hold. So, seeing that all things are subject to pass from one change to another, reason, that there looks for a real substance, finds itself deceived, not being able to apprehend anything that is subsistent and permanent, because that everything is either entering into being, and is not yet wholly arrived at it, or begins to die before it is born. Plato said,[1] that bodies had never any existence, not even birth; conceiving that Homer had made the ocean and Thetis father and mother of the gods, to show us that all things are in a perpetual fluctuation, motion and variation: the opinion of all the philosophers, as he says, before his time, Parmenides only excepted, who would not allow things to have motion, on the power whereof he sets a mighty value. Pythagoras was of opinion that all matter was flowing and unstable: the Stoics, that there is no time present, and that what we call Present is nothing but the juncture and meeting of the future and the past: Heraclitus,[2] that never any man entered twice into the same river: Epicharmus, that he who borrowed money but an hour ago, does not owe it now; and that he who was invited

[1] In the *Theatetes.*

[2] Seneca, *Ep.*, 58.

overnight to come the next day to dinner, comes nevertheless uninvited, considering that they are no more the same men, but are become others; and, "that there could not be found a mortal substance twice in the same condition: for, by the suddenness and quickness of change, it one while disperses and another reassembles; it comes and goes, after such a manner, that what begins to be born never arrives to the perfection of being, forasmuch as that birth is never finished and never stays as being at an end, but, from the seed, is evermore changing and shifting from one to another: as from human seed is first made in the mother's womb a formless embryo, then a formed child, then, in due course, delivered thence a sucking infant: afterwards it becomes a boy, then a lad, then a man, then a middle-aged man, and at last a decrepid old man; so that age and subsequent generation are always destroying and spoiling that which went before":—

> "Mutat enim mundi naturam totius ætas,
> Ex alioque alius status excipere omnia debet;
> Nec manet illa sui similis res; omnia migrant,
> Omnia commutat natura, et vertere cogit."[1]

"And yet we foolishly fear one kind of death, whereas we have already passed and daily pass so many others: for not only, as Heraclitus said, the death of fire is the generation of air, and the death of air the generation of water: but we may still more manifestly discern it in ourselves; the flower of youth dies and passes away, when age comes on; and youth is terminated in the flower of age of a full-grown man, infancy in youth, and

[1] "For time changes the nature of the whole world, and one state gives all things a new state: nothing remains like itself, but all things range; nature changes everything."—Lucretius, v. 826.

the first age dies in infancy; yesterday died in to-day, and to-day will die in to-morrow; and there is nothing that remains in the same state, or that is always the same thing; and that it is so let this be the proof: if we are always one and the same, how comes it then to pass, that we are now pleased with one thing, and by and by with another? how comes it to pass that we love or hate contrary things, that we praise or condemn them? how comes it to pass that we have different affections, and no more retain the same sentiment in the same thought? For it is not likely that without mutation we should assume other passions; and that which suffers mutation does not remain the same, and if it be not the same, it is not at all: but the same that the being is, does, like it, unknowingly change and alter, becoming evermore another from another thing: and, consequently, the natural senses abuse and deceive themselves, taking that which seems for that which is, for want of well knowing what that which is, is. But what is it then that truly is eternal; that is to say, that never had beginning nor never shall have ending, and to which time can bring no mutation: for time is a mobile thing, and that appears as in a shadow, with a matter evermore flowing and running, without ever remaining stable and permanent: and to which those words appertain, Before, and After, Has been, or Shall be: which, at first sight, evidently show that it is not a thing that is; and it were a great folly, and an apparent falsity, to say that that is, which is not yet in being, or that has already ceased to be; and as to these words, Present, Instant, and Now, by which it seems that we principally support and found the intelligence of time, reason discovering, presently

destroys it; for it immediately divides and splits it into the future and past, as, of necessity, considering it divided in two. The same happens to nature which is measured, as to time that measures it: for she has nothing more subsisting and permanent than the other, but all things are therein either born, or being born, or dying. So that it were a sinful saying to say of God, who is He who only IS, that HE WAS or that HE SHALL BE: for those are terms of declension, passages and vicissitude of what cannot continue nor remain in being: wherefore we are to conclude that God only is, not according to any measure of time, but according to an immutable and motionless eternity, not measured by time, nor subject to any declension: before whom nothing was, and after whom nothing shall be, either more new or more recent, but a real BEING, that with one sole Now fills the FOR EVER, and there is nothing that truly is, but HE alone, without one being able to say, He HAS BEEN, or SHALL BE, without beginning, and without end."[1]

To this so religious conclusion of a pagan, I shall only add this testimony of one of the same condition, for the close of this long and tedious discourse, which would furnish me with endless matter. "O what a vile and abject thing," says he,[2] "is man, if he do not raise himself above humanity!" 'Tis a good word, and a profitable desire, but equally absurd; for to make the handful bigger than the hand, and the armful larger than the arm, and to hope to stride further than our legs can reach, is impossible and monstrous; or that man

[1] The whole of the passage between commas is copied word for word from Plutarch on the word Εἰ, c. 22.

[2] Seneca, *Nat. Quæs.*, 1 Præf.

should rise above himself and humanity: for he cannot see but with his eyes, nor seize but with his power. He shall rise if God extraordinarily lends him His hand; he shall rise by abandoning and renouncing his own proper means, and by suffering himself to be raised and elevated by means purely celestial. It belongs to our Christian faith, and not to his Stoical virtue, to pretend to that divine and miraculous metamorphosis.

CHAPTER XIII

OF JUDGING OF THE DEATH OF ANOTHER

WHEN we judge of another's assurance in death, which, without doubt, is the most remarkable action of human life, we are to take heed of one thing, which is that men very hardly believe themselves to have arrived to that period. Few men come to die in the opinion that it is their latest hour; and there is nothing wherein the flattery of hope more deludes us; it never ceases to whisper in our ears, "Others have been much sicker without dying; your condition is not so desperate as 'tis thought; and, at the worst, God has done other miracles." Which happens by reason that we set too much value upon ourselves; it seems as if the universality of things were in some measure to suffer by our dissolution, and that it commiserates our condition, forasmuch as our disturbed sight represents things to itself erroneously, and that we are of opinion they stand in as much need of us as we do of them, like people at sea, to whom mountains, fields, cities, heaven and earth are tossed at the same rate as they are:—

"Provehimur portu, terræque urbesque recedunt"[1]:

Whoever saw old age that did not applaud the past and condemn the present time, laying the fault of his misery and discontent upon the world and the manners of men?—

"Jamque caput quassans, grandis suspirat arator . . .
Et cum tempora temporibus præsentia confert
Præteritis, laudat fortunas sæpe parentis,
Et crepat antiquum genus ut pietate repletum."[2]

We will make all things go along with us; whence it follows that we consider our death as a very great thing, and that does not so easily pass, nor without the solemn consultation of the stars:—

"Tot circa unum caput tumultuantes deos,"[3]

and so much the more think it as we more value ourselves. "What, shall so much knowledge be lost, with so much damage to the world, without a particular concern of the destinies? Does so rare and exemplary a soul cost no more the killing than one that is common and of no use to the public? This life, that protects so many others, upon which so many other lives depend, that employs so vast a number of men in his service, that fills so many places, shall it drop off like one that hangs but by its own simple thread?" None of us lays it enough to heart that he is but one: thence proceeded those words of Cæsar to his pilot, more tumid than the sea that threatened him:—

[1] "We are carried out of port, and cities and lands recede."—*Æneid*, iii. 72.

[2] "Now the old ploughman, shaking his head, sighs, and compares present times with past, often praises his parents' happiness, and talks of the old race as full of piety."—Lucretius, ii. 1165.

[3] "All the gods in agitation about one man."—Seneca, *Suasor*, i. 4.

"Italiam si cœlo auctore recusas,
Me pete: sola tibi causa est hæc justa timoris,
Vectorem non nosce tuum; perrumpe procellas,
Tutela secure meâ. Quem numina nunquam
Destituunt, de quo male tunc Fortuna meretur,
Quum post vota vexit: medias perrumpe procellas,
Tutela secure mea—"

And these:—

"Credit jam digna pericula Cæsar
Fatis esse suis; tantusne evertere, dixit,
Me superis labor est, parvâ quem puppe sedentem,
Tam magno petiere mari"[1];

and that idle fancy of the public, that the sun bore on his face mourning for his death a whole year:—

"Ille etiam extincto miseratus Cæsare Romam,
Cum caput obscurâ nitidum ferrugine texit"[2]:

and a thousand of the like, wherewith the world suffers itself to be so easily imposed upon, believing that our interests affect the heavens, and that their infinity is concerned at our ordinary actions:—

"Non tanta cælo societas nobiscum est, ut nostro fato mortalis sit ille quoque siderum fulgor."[3]

Now, to judge of constancy and resolution in a man who does not yet believe himself to be certainly in danger, though he really is, is not reason; and 'tis not enough that he die in this posture, unless he purposely put himself into it for this effect. It commonly falls out in most

[1] "Cæsar now deemed these dangers worthy of his destiny: 'What!' said he, 'is it for the gods so great a task to overthrow me, that they must be fain to assail me with great seas in a poor little bark.'"—Lucan, v. 653.

[2] "Cæsar being dead, the sun in mourning clouds, pitying Rome, clothed himself."—Virgil, *Georg.*, i. 466.

[3] "There is no such alliance betwixt us and heaven, that the brightness of the stars should be made also mortal by our death."—Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, ii. 8.

men that they set a good face upon the matter and speak with great indifference, to acquire reputation, which they hope afterwards, living, to enjoy. Of all whom I have seen die, fortune has disposed their countenances and no design of theirs; and even of those who in ancient times have made away with themselves, there is much to be considered whether it were a sudden or a lingering death. That cruel Roman Emperor would say of his prisoners, that he would make them feel death, and if any one killed himself in prison, "That fellow has made an escape from me"; he would prolong death and make it felt by torments:—

> "Vidimus et toto quamvis in corpore cæso
> Nil animæ lethale datum, moremque nefandæ,
> Durum sævitiæ, pereuntis parcere morti."[1]

In plain truth, it is no such great matter for a man in health and in a temperate state of mind to resolve to kill himself; it is very easy to play the villain before one comes to the point, insomuch that Heliogabalus, the most effeminate man in the world, amongst his lowest sensualities, could forecast to make himself die delicately, when he should be forced thereto; and that his death might not give the lie to the rest of his life, had purposely built a sumptuous tower, the front and base of which were covered with planks enriched with gold and precious stones, thence to precipitate himself; and also caused cords twisted with gold and crimson silk to be made, wherewith to strangle himself; and a sword with the blade of gold to be hammered out to fall upon; and kept poison in

[1] "We have seen in tortured bodies, amongst the wounds, none that have been mortal, inhuman mode of dire cruelty, that means to kill, but will not let men die."—Lucan, iv. i. 78.

vessels of emerald and topaz wherewith to poison himself according as he should like to choose one of these ways of dying:—

"Impiger ad letum et fortis virtute coactâ."[1]

Yet in respect of this person, the effeminacy of his preparations makes it more likely that he would have thought better on't, had he been put to the test. But in those who with greater resolution have determined to despatch themselves, we must examine whether it were with one blow which took away the leisure of feeling the effect: for it is to be questioned whether, perceiving life, by little and little, to steal away the sentiment of the body mixing itself with that of the soul, and the means of repenting being offered, whether, I say, constancy and obstinacy in so dangerous an intention would have been found.

In the civil wars of Cæsar, Lucius Domitius, being taken in the Abruzzi,[2] and thereupon poisoning himself, afterwards repented. It has happened in our time that a certain person, being resolved to die and not having gone deep enough at the first thrust, the sensibility of the flesh opposing his arm, gave himself two or three wounds more, but could never prevail upon himself to thrust home. Whilst Plautius Silvanus was upon his trial, Urgulania, his grandmother, sent him a poniard with which, not being able to kill himself, he made his servants cut his veins.[3] Albucilla in Tiberius' time having, to kill himself, struck with too much tenderness, gave his adversaries opportunity to imprison and put him

[1] "Resolute and brave in the face of death by a forced courage."—Lucan, iv. 798.

[2] At Corfinium, near the river Aternus. The last French *variorum* reads *La Prusse*.

[3] Tacitus, *Annals*, iv. 22.

to death their own way.[1] And that great leader, Demosthenes, after his rout in Sicily, did the same[2]; and C. Fimbria, having struck himself too weakly, entreated his servant to despatch him. On the contrary, Ostorius, who could not make use of his own arm, disdained to employ that of his servant to any other use but only to hold the poniard straight and firm; and bringing his throat to it, thrust himself through.[3] 'Tis, in truth, a morsel that is to be swallowed without chewing, unless a man be thoroughly resolved: and yet Adrian the emperor made his physician mark and encircle on his pap the mortal place wherein he was to stab to whom he had given orders to kill him. For this reason it was that Cæsar, being asked what death he thought to be the most desired, made answer, "The least premeditated and the shortest."[4] If Cæsar dared to say it, it is no cowardice in me to believe it. "A short death," says Pliny,[5] "is the sovereign good hap of human life." People do not much care to recognise it. No one can say that he is resolute for death who fears to deal with it and cannot undergo it with his eyes open: they whom we see in criminal punishments run to their death and hasten and press their execution, do it not out of resolution, but because they will not give themselves leisure to consider it; it does not trouble them to be dead, but to die:—

"Emori nolo, sed me esse mortuum nihili æstimo"[6]:

'tis a degree of constancy to which I have experimented, that I can arrive, like those who plunge

[1] Tacitus, *Annals*, vi. 48.
[2] Plutarch, *Life of Nicias*, c. 10.
[3] Tacitus, *Annals*, xvi. 15.
[4] Suetonius, *in Vitâ*, c. 87.
[5] *Nat. Hist.*, vii. 53.
[6] "I have no mind to die, but I have no objection to be dead."—Epicharmus, apud Cicero, *Tusc. Quæs.*, i. 8. This sentiment Montaigne has reiterated; and it was not improbably a personal one.

into dangers, as into the sea, with their eyes shut.

There is nothing, in my opinion, more illustrious in the life of Socrates, than that he had thirty whole days wherein to ruminate upon the sentence of his death, to have digested it all that time with a most assured hope, without care, and without alteration, and with a series of words and actions rather careless and indifferent than any way stirred or discomposed by the weight of such a thought.

That Pomponius Atticus, to whom Cicero writes so often, being sick, caused Agrippa, his son-in-law, and two or three more of his friends, to be called to him, and told them, that having found all means practised upon him for his recovery to be in vain, and that all he did to prolong his life also prolonged and augmented his pain, he was resolved to put an end both to the one and the other, desiring them to approve of his determination, or at least not to lose their labour in endeavouring to dissuade him. Now, having chosen to destroy himself by abstinence, his disease was thereby cured: the remedy that he had made use of to kill himself restored him to health. His physicians and friends, rejoicing at so happy an event, and coming to congratulate him, found themselves very much deceived, it being impossible for them to make him alter his purpose, he telling them, that as he must one day die, and was now so far on his way, he would save himself the labour of beginning another time.[1] This man, having surveyed death at leisure, was not only not discouraged at its approach, but eagerly sought it; for being content that he had engaged in the combat, he made it a point of bravery to see

[1] Nepos, *Life of Atticus*, c. 22.

the end; 'tis far beyond not fearing death to taste and relish it.

The story of the philosopher Cleanthes is very like this: he had his gums swollen and rotten; his physicians advised him to great abstinence: having fasted two days, he was so much better that they pronounced him cured, and permitted him to return to his ordinary course of diet; he, on the contrary, already tasting some sweetness in this faintness of his, would not be persuaded to go back, but resolved to proceed, and to finish what he had so far advanced.[1]

Tullius Marcellinus, a young man of Rome, having a mind to anticipate the hour of his destiny, to be rid of a disease that was more trouble to him than he was willing to endure, though his physicians assured him of a certain, though not sudden, cure, called a council of his friends to deliberate about it; of whom some, says Seneca, gave him the counsel that out of unmanliness they would have taken themselves; others, out of flattery, such as they thought he would best like; but a Stoic said this to him: "Do not concern thyself, Marcellinus, as if thou didst deliberate of a thing of importance; 'tis no great matter to live; thy servants and beasts live; but it is a great thing to die handsomely, wisely, and firmly. Do but think how long thou hast done the same things, eat, drink, and sleep, drink, sleep, and eat: we incessantly wheel in the same circle. Not only ill and insupportable accidents, but even the satiety of living, inclines a man to desire to die." Marcellinus did not stand in need of a man to advise, but of a man to assist him; his servants were afraid to meddle in the business, but this philosopher gave them to under-

[1] Diogenes Laertius, viii. 176.

stand that domestics are suspected even when it is in doubt whether the death of the master were voluntary or no; otherwise, that it would be of as ill example to hinder him as to kill him, forasmuch as

"Invitum qui servat, idem facit occidenti."[1]

He then told Marcellinus that it would not be unbecoming, as what is left on the tables when we have eaten is given to the attendants, so, life being ended, to distribute something to those who have been our servants. Now Marcellinus was of a free and liberal spirit; he, therefore, divided a certain sum of money amongst his servants, and consoled them. As to the rest, he had no need of steel nor of blood: he resolved to go out of this life and not to run out of it; not to escape from death, but to essay it. And to give himself leisure to deal with it, having forsaken all manner of nourishment, the third day following, after having caused himself to be sprinkled with warm water, he fainted by degrees, and not without some kind of pleasure, as he himself declared.[2]

In fact, such as have been acquainted with these faintings, proceeding from weakness, say that they are therein sensible of no manner of pain, but rather feel a kind of delight, as in the passage to sleep and rest. These are studied and digested deaths.

But to the end that Cato only may furnish out the whole example of virtue, it seems as if his good destiny had put his ill one into the hand with which he gave himself the blow, seeing he had the leisure to confront and struggle with death, reinforcing his

[1] "He who makes a man live against his will, 'tis as cruel as to kill him."—Horat., *De Arte Poet.*, 467.

[2] Seneca, *Ep.*, 77.

courage in the danger, instead of letting it go less. And if I had had to represent him in his supreme station, I should have done it in the posture of tearing out his bloody bowels, rather than with his sword in his hand, as did the statuaries of his time, for this second murder was much more furious than the first.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW OUR MIND HINDERS ITSELF

'Tis a pleasant imagination to fancy a mind exactly balanced betwixt two equal desires: for, doubtless, it can never pitch upon either, forasmuch as the choice and application would manifest an inequality of esteem; and were we set betwixt the bottle and the ham, with an equal appetite to drink and eat, there would doubtless be no remedy but we must die of thirst and hunger. To provide against this inconvenience, the Stoics,[1] when they are asked whence the election in the soul of two indifferent things proceeds, and that makes us, out of a great number of crowns, rather take one than another, they being all alike, and there being no reason to incline us to such a preference, make answer, that this movement of the soul is extraordinary and irregular, entering into us by a foreign, accidental, and fortuitous impulse. It might rather, methinks, be said, that nothing presents itself to us wherein there is not some difference, how little soever; and that, either by the sight or touch, there is always some choice that, though it be imperceptibly, tempts and attracts us; so, whoever shall presuppose a packthread equally strong throughout,

[1] Plutarch, *Contradictions of the Stoic Philosophers.*

it is utterly impossible it should break; for, where will you have the breaking to begin? and that it should break altogether is not in nature. Whoever, also, should hereunto join the geometrical propositions that, by the certainty of their demonstrations, conclude the contained to be greater than the containing, the centre to be as great as its circumference, and that find out two lines incessantly approaching each other, which yet can never meet, and the philosopher's stone, and the quadrature of the circle, where the reason and the effect are so opposite, might, peradventure, find some argument to second this bold saying of Pliny:—

"Solum certum nihil esse certi, et homine nihil miserius aut superbius."[1]

CHAPTER XV

THAT OUR DESIRES ARE AUGMENTED BY DIFFICULTY

THERE is no reason that has not its contrary, say the wisest of the philosophers. I was just now ruminating on the excellent saying one of the ancients alleges for the contempt of life: "No good can bring pleasure, unless it be that for the loss of which we are beforehand prepared":—

"In æquo est dolor amissæ rei, et timor amittendæ,"[2]

meaning by this that the fruition of life cannot be truly pleasant to us if we are in fear of losing

[1] "It is only certain that there is nothing certain, and that nothing is more miserable or more proud than man."—*Nat. Hist.*, ii. 7.

[2] "The grief of losing a thing, and the fear of losing it, are equal."—Seneca, *Ep.*, 98.

it. It might, however, be said, on the contrary, that we hug and embrace this good so much the more earnestly, and with so much greater affection, by how much we see it the less assured and fear to have it taken from us: for it is evident, as fire burns with greater fury when cold comes to mix with it, that our will is more obstinate by being opposed:—

> "Si nunquam Danaen habuisset ahenea turris,
> Non esses, Danaë, de Jove facta parens"[1];

and that there is nothing naturally so contrary to our taste as satiety which proceeds from facility; nor anything that so much whets it as rarity and difficulty:—

> "Omnium rerum voluptas ipso, quo debet fugare, periculo crescit."[2]

> "Galla, nega; satiatur amor, nisi gaudia torquent."[3]

To keep love in breath, Lycurgus[4] made a decree that the married people of Lacedæmon should never enjoy one another but by stealth; and that it should be as great a shame to take them in bed together as committing with others. The difficulty of assignations, the danger of surprise, the shame of the morning:—

> "Et languor, et silentium, . . .
> Et latere petitus imo spiritus"[5]:

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[1] "If a brazen tower had not held Danaë, you would not, Danaë, have been made a mother by Jove."—Ovid, *Amor.*, ii. 19, 27.

[2] "The pleasure of all things increases by the same danger that should deter it."—Seneca, *De Benef.*, vii. 9.

[3] "Galla, refuse me; love is glutted with joys that are not attended with trouble."—Martial, iv. 37.

[4] Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus.*

[5] "And languor, and silence, and sighs, coming from the innermost heart."—Hor., *Epod.*, xi. 9.

these are what give the piquancy to the sauce. How many very wantonly pleasant sports spring from the most decent and modest language of the works on love? Pleasure itself seeks to be heightened with pain; it is much sweeter when it smarts and has the skin rippled. The courtesan Flora said she never lay with Pompey but that she made him wear the prints of her teeth[1]:—

> "Quod petiere, premunt arcte, faciuntque dolorem
> Corporis, et dentes inlidunt sæpe labellis . . .
> Et stimuli subsunt, qui instigant lædere ad ipsum,
> Quodcunque est, rabies unde illæ germina surgunt."[2]

And so it is in everything: difficulty gives all things their estimation; the people of the March of Ancona more readily make their vows to St. James,[3] and those of Galicia to Our Lady of Loreto; they make wonderful to-do at Liege about the baths of Lucca, and in Tuscany about those of Aspa[4]: there are few Romans seen in the fencing school of Rome, which is full of French. That great Cato also, as much as us, nauseated his wife whilst she was his, and longed for her when in the possession of another. I was fain to turn out into the paddock an old horse, as he was not to be governed when he smelt a mare: the facility presently sated him as towards his own, but towards strange mares, and the first that passed by the pale of his pasture, he would again fall to his importunate neighings and his furious heats as before. Our appetite contemns and passes by what it has in possession, to run after that it has not:—

[1] Plutarch, *Life of Pompey*, c. 1.

[2] "What they have sought they press closely, and cause pain; on the lips fix the teeth, and every kiss indents: urged by latent stimulus the part to wound."—Lucretius, 1. 4.

[3] Of Compostella in Galicia.

[4] Spa.

"Transvolat in medio posita, et fugientia captat."[1]

To forbid us anything is to make us have a mind to't:—

"Nisi tu servare puellam
Incipis, incipiet desinere esse mea"[2]:

to give it wholly up to us is to beget in us contempt. Want and abundance fall into the same inconvenience:—

"Tibi quod superest, mihi quod desit, dolet."[3]

Desire and fruition equally afflict us. The rigors of mistresses are troublesome, but facility, to say truth, still more so; forasmuch as discontent and anger spring from the esteem we have of the thing desired, heat and actuate love, but satiety begets disgust; 'tis a blunt, dull, stupid, tired, and slothful passion:—

"Si qua volet regnare diu, contemnat amantem."[4]

"Contemnite, amantes:
Sic hodie veniet, si qua negavit heri."[5]

Why did Poppea invent the use of a mask to hide the beauties of her face, but to enhance it to her lovers?[6] Why have they veiled, even below the heels, those beauties that every one desires to show, and that every one desires to see? Why do they cover with so many hindrances, one over another, the parts where our desires and their own have

[1] "He slights her who is close at hand, and runs after her who flees from him."—Horace, *Sat.*, i. 2, 108.

[2] "Unless you begin to guard your mistress, she will soon begin to be no longer mine."—Ovid, *Amor.*, ii. 19, 47.

[3] "Your superfluities trouble you, and what I want troubles me."—Terence, *Phorm.*, i. 3, 9.

[4] "She who would long retain her power must use her lover ill."—Ovid, *Amor.*, ii. 19, 33.

[5] "Slight your mistress; she will to-day come who denied you yesterday."—Propertius, ii. 14, 19.

[6] Tacitus, *Annal.*, xiii. 45.

their principal seat? And to what serve those great bastion farthingales, with which our ladies fortify their haunches, but to allure our appetite and to draw us on by removing them farther from us?—

"Et fugit ad salices, et se cupit ante videri."[1]

"Interdum tunica duxit operta moram."[2]

To what use serves the artifice of this virgin modesty, this grave coldness, this severe countenance, this professing to be ignorant of things that they know better than we who instruct them in them, but to increase in us the desire to overcome, control, and trample underfoot at pleasure all this ceremony and all these obstacles? For there is not only pleasure, but, moreover, glory, in conquering and debauching that soft sweetness and that childish modesty, and to reduce a cold and matron-like gravity to the mercy of our ardent desires: 'tis a glory, say they, to triumph over modesty, chastity, and temperance; and whoever dissuades ladies from those qualities, betrays both them and himself. We are to believe that their hearts tremble with affright, that the very sound of our words offends the purity of their ears, that they hate us for talking so, and only yield to our importunity by a compulsive force. Beauty, all powerful as it is, has not wherewithal to make itself relished without the mediation of these little arts. Look into Italy, where there is the most and the finest beauty to be sold, how it is necessitated to have recourse to extrinsic means and other artifices to render itself charming, and yet, in

[1] "She flies to the osiers, and desires beforehand to be seen going."—Virgil, *Eclog.*, iii. 65.

[2] "The hidden robe has sometimes checked love."—Propertius, ii. 15, 6.

truth, whatever it may do, being venal and public, it remains feeble and languishing. Even so in virtue itself, of two like effects, we notwithstanding look upon that as the fairest and most worthy, wherein the most trouble and hazard are set before us.

'Tis an effect of the divine Providence to suffer the holy Church to be afflicted, as we see it, with so many storms and troubles, by this opposition to rouse pious souls, and to awaken them from that drowsy lethargy wherein, by so long tranquillity, they had been immerged. If we should lay the loss we have sustained in the number of those who have gone astray, in the balance against the benefit we have had by being again put in breath, and by having our zeal and strength revived by reason of this opposition, I know not whether the utility would not surmount the damage.

We have thought to tie the nuptial knot of our marriages more fast and firm by having taken away all means of dissolving it, but the knot of the will and affection is so much the more slackened and made loose, by how much that of constraint is drawn closer; and, on the contrary, that which kept the marriages at Rome so long in honour and inviolate, was the liberty every one who so desired had to break them; they kept their wives the better, because they might part with them, if they would; and, in the full liberty of divorce, five hundred years and more passed away before any one made use on't.[1]

"Quod licet, ingratum est; quod non licet, acrius urit."[2]

[1] "Il se passa cinq cent ans et plus, avant que nul s'en servist."—Valerius Maximus, ii. 1, 4.

[2] "What you may, is displeasing; what is forbidden, whets the appetite."—Ovid, *Amor.*, ii. 19.

We might here introduce the opinion of an ancient upon this occasion, "that executions rather whet than dull the edge of vices: that they do not beget the care of doing well, that being the work of reason and discipline, but only a care not to be taken in doing ill":

"Latius excisæ pestis contagia serpunt."[1]

I do not know that this is true; but I experimentally know, that never civil government was by that means reformed; the order and regimen of manners depend upon some other expedient.

The Greek histories[2] make mention of the Argippians, neighbours to Scythia, who live without either rod or stick for offence; where not only no one attempts to attack them, but whoever can fly thither is safe, by reason of their virtue and sanctity of life, and no one is so bold as to lay hands upon them; and they have applications made to them to determine the controversies that arise betwixt men of other countries. There is a certain nation, where the enclosures of gardens and fields they would preserve, are made only of a string of cotton; and, so fenced, is more firm and secure than by our hedges and ditches:—

"Furem signata sollicitant . . . aperta effractarius præterit."[3]

Peradventure, the facility of entering my house, amongst other things, has been a means to preserve it from the violence of our civil wars: defence allures attempt, and defiance provokes an enemy. I enervated the soldiers' design by depriving the exploit of danger and all manner of military glory,

[1] "The infection of the checked plague spreads all the more."—Rutilius, *Itinerar.*, iv. 397.

[2] Herodotus, iv. 23.

[3] "Things sealed up invite a thief: the housebreaker passes by open doors."—Seneca, *Epist.*, 68.

which is wont to serve them for pretence and excuse: whatever is bravely, is ever honourably, done, at a time when justice is dead. I render them the conquest of my house cowardly and base; it is never shut to any one that knocks; my gate has no other guard than a porter, and he of ancient custom and ceremony, who does not so much serve to defend it as to offer it with more decorum and grace; I have no other guard nor sentinel than the stars. A gentleman would play the fool to make a show of defence, if he be not really in a condition to defend himself. He who lies open on one side, is everywhere so; our ancestors did not think of building frontier garrisons. The means of assaulting, I mean without battery or army, and of surprising our houses, increases every day more and more beyond the means to guard them; men's wits are generally bent that way; in invasion every one is concerned: none but the rich in defence. Mine was strong for the time when it was built; I have added nothing to it of that kind, and should fear that its strength might turn against myself; to which we are to consider that a peaceable time would require it should be dismantled. There is danger never to be able to regain it, and it would be very hard to keep; for in intestine dissensions, your man may be of the party you fear; and where religion is the pretext, even a man's nearest relations become unreliable, with some colour of justice. The public exchequer will not maintain our domestic garrisons; they would exhaust it: we ourselves have not the means to do it without ruin, or, which is more inconvenient and injurious, without ruining the people. The condition of my loss would be scarcely worse. As to the rest, you there lose all; and even your friends will be more ready to accuse

your want of vigilance and your improvidence, and your ignorance of and indifference to your own business, than to pity you. That so many garrisoned houses have been undone whereas this of mine remains, makes me apt to believe that they were only lost by being guarded; this gives an enemy both an invitation and colour of reason; all defence shows a face of war. Let who will come to me in God's name; but I shall not invite them; 'tis the retirement I have chosen for my repose from war. I endeavour to withdraw this corner from the public tempest, as I also do another corner in my soul. Our war may put on what forms it will, multiply and diversify itself into new parties; for my part, I stir not. Amongst so many garrisoned houses, myself alone amongst those of my rank, so far as I know, in France, have trusted purely to Heaven for the protection of mine, and have never removed plate, deeds, or hangings. I will neither fear nor save myself by halves. If a full acknowledgment acquires the Divine favour, it will stay with me to the end: if not, I have still continued long enough to render my continuance remarkable and fit to be recorded. How? Why, there are thirty years that I have thus lived.

CHAPTER XVI

OF GLORY

THERE is the name and the thing: the name is a voice which denotes and signifies the thing; the name is no part of the thing, nor of the substance; 'tis a foreign piece joined to the thing, and outside it.

God, who is all fulness in Himself and the height of all perfection, cannot augment or add anything to Himself within; but His name may be augmented and increased by the blessing and praise we attribute to His exterior works: which praise, seeing we cannot incorporate it in Him, forasmuch as He can have no accession of good, we attribute to His name, which is the part out of Him that is nearest to us. Thus is it that to God alone glory and honour appertain; and there is nothing so remote from reason as that we should go in quest of it for ourselves; for, being indigent and necessitous within, our essence being imperfect, and having continual need of amelioration, 'tis to that we ought to employ all our endeavour. We are all hollow and empty; 'tis not with wind and voice that we are to fill ourselves; we want a more solid substance to repair us: a man starving with hunger would be very simple to seek rather to provide himself with a gay garment than with a good meal: we are to look after that whereof we have most need. As we have it in our ordinary prayers:—

"Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus."[1]

We are in want of beauty, health, wisdom, virtue, and such-like essential qualities: exterior ornaments should be looked after when we have made provision for necessary things. Divinity treats amply and more pertinently of this subject, but I am not much versed in it.

Chrysippus and Diogenes[2] were the earliest and firmest advocates of the contempt of glory; and

[1] "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men."—St. Luke, ii. 14.

[2] Cicero, *De Finib.*, iii. 17.

maintained that, amongst all pleasures, there was none more dangerous nor more to be avoided than that which proceeds from the approbation of others. And, in truth, experience makes us sensible of many very hurtful treasons in it. There is nothing that so poisons princes as flattery, nor anything whereby wicked men more easily obtain credit and favour with them; nor panderism so apt and so usually made use of to corrupt the chastity of women as to wheedle and entertain them with their own praises. The first charm the Syrens made use of to allure Ulysses is of this nature:—

> "Deça vers nous, deça, o tres-louable Ulysse,
> Et le plus grand honneur dont la Grèce fleurisse."[1]

These philosophers said, that all the glory of the world was not worth an understanding man's holding out his finger to obtain it:—

> "Gloria quantalibet quid erit, si gloria tantum est?"[2]

I say for it alone; for it often brings several commodities along with it, for which it may justly be desired: it acquires us good-will, and renders us less subject and exposed to insult and offence from others, and the like. It was also one of the principal doctrines of Epicurus; for this precept of his sect, Conceal thy life, that forbids men to encumber themselves with public negotiations and offices, also necessarily presupposes a contempt of glory, which is the world's approbation of those actions we produce in public.[3] He that bids us

[1] "Come hither to us, O admirable Ulysses, come hither, thou greatest ornament and pride of Greece."—Homer, *Odysseus*, xii. 184.

[2] "What is glory, be it as glorious as it may be, if it be no more than glory?"—Juvenal, *Sat.*, vii. 81.

[3] Plutarch, *Whether the saying, Conceal thy life, is well said.*

conceal ourselves, and to have no other concern but for ourselves, and who will not have us known to others, would much less have us honoured and glorified; and so advises Idomeneus not in any sort to regulate his actions by the common reputation or opinion, except so as to avoid the other accidental inconveniences that the contempt of men might bring upon him.

These discourses are, in my opinion, very true and rational; but we are, I know not how, double in ourselves, which is the cause that what we believe we do not believe, and cannot disengage ourselves from what we condemn. Let us see the last and dying words of Epicurus; they are grand, and worthy of such a philosopher, and yet they carry some touches of the recommendation of his name and of that humour he had decried by his precepts. Here is a letter that he dictated a little before his last gasp[1]:—

"*Epicurus to Hermachus, health.*

"Whilst I was passing over the happy and last day of my life, I write this, but, at the same time, afflicted with such pain in my bladder and bowels that nothing can be greater, but it was recompensed with the pleasure the remembrance of my inventions and doctrines brought to my soul. Now, as the affection thou hast ever from thy infancy borne towards me and philosophy requires, take upon thee the protection of Metrodorus' children."

This is the letter. And that which makes me interpret that the pleasure he says he had in his soul concerning his inventions, has some reference to the reputation he hoped for thence after his

[1] Cicero, *De Finibus*, ii. 30.

death, is the manner of his will, in which he gives order that Amynomachus and Timocrates, his heirs, should, every January, defray the expense of the celebration of his birthday as Hermachus should appoint; and also the expense that should be made the twentieth of every moon in entertaining the philosophers, his friends, who should assemble in honour of the memory of him and of Metrodorus.[1]

Carneades was head of the contrary opinion, and maintained that glory was to be desired for itself, even as we embrace our posthumous issue for themselves, having no knowledge nor enjoyment of them.[2] This opinion has not failed to be the more universally followed, as those commonly are that are most suitable to our inclinations. Aristotle gives it the first place amongst external goods; and avoids, as too extreme vices, the immoderate either seeking or evading it.[3] I believe that, if we had the books Cicero wrote upon this subject, we should there find pretty stories; for he was so possessed with this passion, that, if he had dared, I think he could willingly have fallen into the excess that others did, that virtue itself was not to be coveted, but upon the account of the honour that always attends it:—

> "Paulum sepultæ distat inertiæ
> Celata virtus"[4]:

which is an opinion so false, that I am vexed it could ever enter into the understanding of a man that was honoured with the name of philosopher.

[1] Cicero, *De Finibus*, ii. 30.

[2] "It is not Carneades whom Cicero charges with this opinion, but other philosophers of Zeno's sect."—Coste.

[3] *Nichom. Ethics*, ii. 7.

[4] "Virtue concealed little differs from dead sloth."—Horace, *Od.*, iv. 9, 29.

If this were true, men need not be virtuous but in public; and we should be no further concerned to keep the operations of the soul, which is the true seat of virtue, regular and in order, than as they are to arrive at the knowledge of others. Is there no more in it, then, but only slily and with circumspection to do ill? "If thou knowest," says Carneades,[1] "of a serpent lurking in a place where, without suspicion, a person is going to sit down, by whose death thou expectest an advantage, thou dost ill if thou dost not give him caution of his danger; and so much the more because the action is to be known by none but thyself." If we do not take up of ourselves the rule of well-doing, if impunity pass with us for justice, to how many sorts of wickedness shall we every day abandon ourselves? I do not find what Sextus Peduceus did, in faithfully restoring the treasure that C. Plotius had committed to his sole secrecy and trust,[2] a thing that I have often done myself, so commendable, as I should think it an execrable baseness, had we done otherwise; and I think it of good use in our days to recall the example of P. Sextilius Rufus, whom Cicero[3] accuses to have entered upon an inheritance contrary to his conscience, not only not against law, but even by the determination of the laws themselves; and M. Crassus and Q. Hortensius,[4] who, by reason of their authority and power, having been called in by a stranger to share in the succession of a forged will, that so he might secure his own part, satisfied themselves with having no hand in the forgery, and refused not to make their advantage and to come in for a share: secure enough, if they could shroud

[1] Cicero, *De Finibus*, ii. 18.
[2] Idem, *ibid.*, 18.
[3] Idem, *ibid.*, 17.
[4] Cicero, *De Offic.*, iii. 18.

themselves from accusations, witnesses, and the cognisance of the laws:—

"Meminerint Deum se habere testem, id est (ut ego arbitror) mentem suam."[1]

Virtue is a very vain and frivolous thing if it derive its recommendation from glory; and 'tis to no purpose that we endeavour to give it a station by itself, and separate it from fortune; for what is more accidental than reputation?—

"Profectò fortuna in omni re dominatur: ea res cunctas ex libidine magis, quàm ex vero, celebrat, obscuratque."[2]

So to order it that actions may be known and seen is purely the work of fortune; 'tis chance that helps us to glory, according to its own temerity. I have often seen her go before merit, and often very much outstrip it. He who first likened glory to a shadow did better than he was aware of; they are both of them things pre-eminently vain: glory also, like a shadow, goes sometimes before the body, and sometimes in length infinitely exceeds it. They who instruct gentlemen only to employ their valour for the obtaining of honour:—

"quasi non sit honestum, quod nobilitatum non sit"[3];

what do they intend by that but to instruct them never to hazard themselves if they are not seen, and to observe well if there be witnesses present who may carry news of their valour, whereas a thousand occasions of well-doing present themselves which cannot be taken notice of? How

[1] "Let them consider they have God to witness, that is (as I interpret it), their own consciences."—Cicero, *De Offic.*, iii. 10.

[2] "Fortune rules in all things; it advances and depresses things more out of its own will than of right and justice."—Sallust, *Catilina*, c. 8.

[3] "As though it were not a virtue, unless celebrated."—Cicero, *De Offic.*, i. 4.

many brave individual actions are buried in the crowd of a battle? Whoever shall take upon him to watch another's behaviour in such a confusion is not very busy himself, and the testimony he shall give of his companions' deportment will be evidence against himself:—

"Vera et sapiens animi magnitudo, honestum illud, quod maximè naturam sequitur, in factis positum, non in gloriâ, judicat."[1]

All the glory that I pretend to derive from my life is that I have lived it in quiet; in quiet, not according to Metrodorus, or Arcesilaus, or Aristippus, but according to myself. For seeing philosophy has not been able to find out any way to tranquillity that is good in common, let every one seek it in particular.

To what do Cæsar and Alexander owe the infinite grandeur of their renown but to fortune? How many men has she extinguished in the beginning of their progress, of whom we have no knowledge, who brought as much courage to the work as they, if their adverse hap had not cut them off in the first sally of their arms? Amongst so many and so great dangers I do not remember I have anywhere read that Cæsar was ever wounded; a thousand have fallen in less dangers than the least of those he went through. An infinite number of brave actions must be performed without witness and lost, before one turns to account. A man is not always on the top of a breach, or at the head of an army, in the sight of his general, as upon a scaffold; a man is often surprised betwixt the hedge and the ditch; he must run the hazard of his life against a henroost; he must dislodge four rascally musketeers out of a barn; he must prick out single from his

[1] "The true and wise magnanimity judges that the bravery which most follows nature more consists in act than glory."—Cicero, *De Offic.* i. 19.

party, and alone make some attempts, according as necessity will have it. And whoever will observe will, I believe, find it experimentally true, that occasions of the least lustre are ever the most dangerous; and that in the wars of our own times there have more brave men been lost in occasions of little moment, and in the dispute about some little paltry fort, than in places of greatest importance, and where their valour might have been more honourably employed.

Who thinks his death achieved to ill purpose if he do not fall on some signal occasion, instead of illustrating his death, wilfully obscures his life, suffering in the meantime many very just occasions of hazarding himself to slip out of his hands; and every just one is illustrious enough, every man's conscience being a sufficient trumpet to him:—

"Gloria nostra est testimonium conscientiæ nostræ."[1]

He who is only a good man that men may know it, and that he may be the better esteemed when 'tis known: who will not do well but upon condition that his virtue may be known to men: is one from whom much service is not to be expected:—

"Credo ch 'el reste di quel verno, cose
Facesse degne di tener ne conto;
Ma fur fin' à quel tempo si nascose,
Che non è colpa mia s' hor 'non le conto:
Perche Orlando a far l' opre virtuose
Piu ch' a nàrrar le poi sempre era pronto;
Nè mai fu alcun' de' li suoi fatti espresso,
Se non quando ebbe i testimonii appresso."[2]

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[1] "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience."—2 *Corinthians*, i. 1.

[2] "The rest of the winter, I believe, was spent in actions worthy of narration, but they were done so secretly that if I do not tell them I am not to blame, for Orlando was more bent to do great acts than to boast of them, so that no deeds of his were ever known but those that had witnesses."—Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, xi. 81.

A man must go to the war upon the account of duty, and expect the recompense that never fails brave and worthy actions, how private soever, or even virtuous thoughts—the satisfaction that a well-disposed conscience receives in itself in doing well. A man must be valiant for himself, and upon account of the advantage it is to him to have his courage seated in a firm and secure place against the assaults of fortune :—

> "Virtus, repulsæ nescia sordidæ
> Intaminatis fulget honoribus :
> Nec sumit, aut ponit secures
> Arbitrio popularis auræ."[1]

It is not for outward show that the soul is to play its part, but for ourselves within, where no eyes can pierce but our own ; there she defends us from the fear of death, of pain, of shame itself : there she arms us against the loss of our children, friends, and fortunes : and when opportunity presents itself, she leads us on to the hazards of war :—

> "Non emolumento aliquo, sed ipsius honestatis decore."[2]

This profit is of much greater advantage, and more worthy to be coveted and hoped for, than honour and glory, which are no other than a favourable judgment given of us.

A dozen men must be called out of a whole nation to judge about an acre of land ; and the judgment of our inclinations and actions, the most difficult and most important matter that is, we refer to the voice and determination of the rabble, the mother of ignorance, injustice, and inconstancy. Is it

[1] "Virtue, ignorant of sordid refusal, shines in taintless honours, nor takes nor leaves authority at the mere will of the vulgar."—Horace, *Od.*, iii. 2, 17.

[2] "Not for any profit, but for the honour of honesty itself."—Cicero, *De Finib.*, i. 10.

reasonable that the life of a wise man should depend upon the judgment of fools?—

"An quidquam stultius, quam, quos singulos contemnas, eos aliquid putare esse universos?"[1]

He that makes it his business to please them, will have enough to do and never have done; 'tis a mark that can never be aimed at or hit:—

"Nil tam inæstimabile est, quam animi multitudinis."[2]

Demetrius pleasantly said of the voice of the people, that he made no more account of that which came from above than of that which came from below. He [Cicero] says more:—

"Ego hoc judico, si quando turpe non sit, tamen non esse non turpe, quum id à multitudine laudatur."[3]

No art, no activity of wit, could conduct our steps so as to follow so wandering and so irregular a guide; in this windy confusion of the noise of vulgar reports and opinions that drive us on, no way worth anything can be chosen. Let us not propose to ourselves so floating and wavering an end; let us follow constantly after reason; let the public approbation follow us there, if it will; and as it wholly depends upon fortune, we have no reason sooner to expect it by any other way than that. Even though I would not follow the right way because it is right, I should, however, follow it as having experimentally found that, at the end of

[1] "Can anything be more foolish than to think that those you despise singly, can be anything else in general."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quæst.*, v. 36.

[2] "Nothing is to be so little understood as the minds of the multitude."—Livy, xxxi. 34.

[3] "I am of opinion, that though a thing be not foul in itself, yet it cannot but become so when commended by the multitude."—Cicero, *De Finib.*, ii. 15.

the reckoning, 'tis commonly the most happy and of greatest utility :—

"Dedit hoc providentia hominibus munus, ut honesta magis juvarent."[1]

The mariner of old said thus to Neptune, in a great tempest: "O God, thou wilt save me if thou wilt, and if thou choosest, thou wilt destroy me; but, however, I will hold my rudder straight."[2] I have seen in my time a thousand men supple, half-bred, ambiguous, whom no one doubted to be more worldly-wise than I, lose themselves, where I have saved myself:—

"Risi successu posse carere dolos."[3]

Paulus Æmilius, going on the glorious expedition of Macedonia, above all things charged the people of Rome not to speak of his actions during his absence.[4] Oh, the license of judgments is a great disturbance to great affairs! forasmuch as every one has not the firmness of Fabius against common, adverse, and injurious tongues, who rather suffered his authority to be dissected by the vain fancies of men, than to do less well in his charge with a favourable reputation and the popular applause.

There is I know not what natural sweetness in hearing one's self commended; but we are a great deal too fond of it:—

"Laudari metuam, neque enim mihi cornea fibra est:
Sed recti finemque extremumque esse recuso
Euge tuum, *et belle!*"[5]

[1] "This gift Providence has given to men, that honest things should be the most agreeable."—Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, i. 12.

[2] Seneca, *Ep.*, 85.

[3] "I have laughed to see cunning able to fail of success."—Ovid, *Heroid*, i. 18.

[4] Livy, xliv. 22.

[5] "I should fear to be praised, for my heart is not made of horn; but I deny that 'excellent—admirably done,' are the terms and final aim of virtue."—Persius, i. 47.

I care not so much what I am in the opinions of others, as what I am in my own; I would be rich of myself, and not by borrowing. Strangers see nothing but events and outward appearances; everybody can set a good face on the matter, when they have trembling and terror within: they do not see my heart, they see but my countenance. One is right in decrying the hypocrisy that is in war; for what is more easy to an old soldier than to shift in a time of danger, and to counterfeit the brave when he has no more heart than a chicken? There are so many ways to avoid hazarding a man's own person, that we have deceived the world a thousand times before we come to be engaged in a real danger: and even then, finding ourselves in an inevitable necessity of doing something, we can make shift for that time to conceal our apprehensions by setting a good face on the business, though the heart beats within; and whoever had the use of the Platonic ring,[1] which renders those invisible that wear it, if turned inward towards the palm of the hand, a great many would very often hide themselves when they ought most to appear, and would repent being placed in so honourable a post, where necessity must make them bold:—

> "Falsus honor juvat, et mendax infamia terret
> Quem nisi mendosum et medicandum? . . ."[2]

Thus we see how all the judgments that are founded upon external appearances, are marvellously uncertain and doubtful; and that there is no so certain testimony as every one is to himself. In these, how many soldiers' boys are companions of our glory? he who stands firm in an open trench,

[1] The ring of Gyges.—Plato, *Republic*, ii. 3; Cicero, *De Offic.*, iii. 9.
[2] "False honour pleases, and calumny affrights, the guilty and the sick."—Horace, *Ep.*, i. 16, 89.

what does he in that more than fifty poor pioneers who open to him the way and cover it with their own bodies for fivepence a day pay, do before him?

> "——non si quid turbida Roma
> Elevet, accedas; examenque improbum in illa
> Castiges trutina: nec te quæsiveris extra."[1]

The dispersing and scattering our names into many mouths, we call making them more great; we will have them there well received, and that this increase turn to their advantage, which is all that can be excusable in this design. But the excess of this disease proceeds so far that many covet to have a name, be it what it will. Trogus Pompeius says[2] of Herostratus, and Titus Livius[3] of Manlius Capitolinus, that they were more ambitious of a great reputation than of a good one. This is very common; we are more solicitous that men speak of us, than how they speak; and it is enough for us that our names are often mentioned, be it after what manner it will. It should seem that to be known, is in some sort to have a man's life and its duration in others' keeping. I, for my part, hold that I am not, but in myself; and of that other life of mine which lies in the knowledge of my friends, to consider it naked and simply in itself, I know very well that I am sensible of no fruit nor enjoyment from it but by the vanity of a fantastic opinion; and when I shall be dead, I shall be still and much less sensible of it; and shall, withal, absolutely lose the use of those real advantages that sometimes accidentally follow it.

[1] "Do not, if turbulent Rome disparage anything, accede; nor correct a false balance by that scale; nor seek anything beyond thyself."—Persius, *Sat.*, i. 5.

[2] It is not Trogus Pompeius, of whom, indeed, only an abridgment by Justin remains. The passage is in Valerius Maximus, viii. 14, Ex. 5.

[3] vi. 11.

I shall have no more handle whereby to take hold of reputation, neither shall it have any whereby to take hold of or to cleave to me; for to expect that my name should be advanced by it, in the first place, I have no name that is enough my own; of two that I have, one is common to all my race, and indeed to others also; there are two families at Paris and Montpellier, whose surname is Montaigne, another in Brittany, and one in Xaintonge, De La Montaigne. The transposition of one syllable only would suffice so to ravel our affairs, that I shall share in their glory, and they peradventure will partake of my discredit; and, moreover, my ancestors have formerly been surnamed[1] Eyquem, a name wherein a family well known in England is at this day concerned. As to my other name, every one may take it that will, and so, perhaps, I may honour a porter in my own stead. And besides, though I had a particular distinction by myself, what can it distinguish, when I am no more? Can it point out and favour inanity?—

> "Non levior cippus nunc imprimit ossa?
> Laudant convivæ! Nunc non e Manibus illis,
> Nunc non e tumulo fortunatâque favillâ,
> Nascentur violæ?"[2]

but of this I have spoken elsewhere. As to what remains, in a great battle where ten thousand men are maimed or killed, there are not fifteen who are taken notice of; it must be some very eminent greatness, or some consequence of great importance that fortune has added to it, that signalises a private action, not of a harquebuser only, but of a great

[1] Not surnamed, for *Eyquem* was the patronymic.

[2] "Does the tomb press with less weight upon my bones? Do comrades praise! Not from my Manes, not from the tomb, not from the ashes will violets grow."—Persius, *Sat.*, i. 37.

captain; for to kill a man, or two, or ten: to expose a man's self bravely to the utmost peril of death, is indeed something in every one of us, because we there hazard all; but for the world's concern, they are things so ordinary, and so many of them are every day seen, and there must of necessity be so many of the same kind to produce any notable effect, that we cannot expect any particular renown from it:—

"Casus multis hic cognitus, ac jam
Tritus, et e medio fortunæ ductus acervo."[1]

Of so many thousands of valiant men who have died within these fifteen hundred years in France with their swords in their hands, not a hundred have come to our knowledge. The memory, not of the commanders only, but of battles and victories, is buried and gone; the fortunes of above half of the world, for want of a record, stir not from their place, and vanish without duration. If I had unknown events in my possession, I should think with great ease to out-do those that are recorded, in all sorts of examples. Is it not strange that even of the Greeks and Romans, with so many writers and witnesses, and so many rare and noble exploits, so few are arrived at our knowledge:—

"Ad nos vix tenuis famæ perlabitur aura."[2]

It will be much if, a hundred years hence, it be remembered in general that in our times there were civil wars in France. The Lacedæmonians, entering into battle, sacrificed to the Muses,[3] to the end that their actions might be well and worthily written, looking upon it as a divine and no common favour,

[1] "The accident is known to many, and now trite; and drawn from the midst of Fortune's heap."—Juvenal, *Sat.*, xiii. 9.
[2] "An obscure rumour scarce is hither come."—*Æneid*, vii. 646.
[3] Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Ancients.*

that brave acts should find witnesses that could give them life and memory. Do we expect that at every musket-shot we receive, and at every hazard we run, there must be a register ready to record it? and, besides, a hundred registers may enrol them whose commentaries will not last above three days, and will never come to the sight of any one. We have not the thousandth part of ancient writings; 'tis fortune that gives them a shorter or longer life, according to her favour; and 'tis permissible to doubt whether those we have be not the worst, not having seen the rest. Men do not write histories of things of so little moment: a man must have been general in the conquest of an empire or a kingdom; he must have won two-and-fifty set battles, and always the weaker in number, as Cæsar did: ten thousand brave fellows and many great captains lost their lives valiantly in his service, whose names lasted no longer than their wives and children lived:—

"Quos fama obscura recondit."[1]

Even those whom we see behave themselves well, three months or three years after they have departed hence, are no more mentioned than if they had never been. Whoever will justly consider, and with due proportion, of what kind of men and of what sort of actions the glory sustains itself in the records of history, will find that there are very few actions and very few persons of our times who can there pretend any right. How many worthy men have we known to survive their own reputation, who have seen and suffered the honour and glory most justly acquired in their youth, extinguished in their own presence? And for three years of this fantastic

[1] "Whom an obscure reputation conceals."—*Æneid*, v. 302.

and imaginary life we must go and throw away our true and essential life, and engage ourselves in a perpetual death! The sages propose to themselves a nobler and more just end in so important an enterprise:—

"Recte facti, fecisse merces est: officii fructus, ipsum officium est."[1]

It were, peradventure, excusable in a painter or other artisan, or in a rhetorician or a grammarian, to endeavour to raise himself a name by his works; but the actions of virtue are too noble in themselves to seek any other reward than from their own value, and especially to seek it in the vanity of human judgments.

If this false opinion, nevertheless, be of such use to the public as to keep men in their duty; if the people are thereby stirred up to virtue; if princes are touched to see the world bless the memory of Trajan, and abominate that of Nero; if it moves them to see the name of that great beast, once so terrible and feared, so freely cursed and reviled by every schoolboy, let it by all means increase, and be as much as possible nursed up and cherished amongst us; and Plato, bending his whole endeavour to make his citizens virtuous, also advises them not to despise the good repute and esteem of the people; and says it falls out, by a certain Divine inspiration, that even the wicked themselves oft-times, as well by word as opinion, can rightly distinguish the virtuous from the wicked. This person and his tutor are both marvellous and bold artificers everywhere to add divine operations and revelations where human force is wanting:—

[1] "The reward of a thing well done is to have done it; the fruit of a good service is the service itself."—Seneca, *Ep.*, 8.

"Ut tragici poetæ confugiunt ad deum, cum explicare argumenti exitum non possunt"[1]:

and peradventure, for this reason it was that Timon, railing at him, called him the great forger of miracles.[2] Seeing that men, by their insufficiency, cannot pay themselves well enough with current money, let the counterfeit be superadded. 'Tis a way that has been practised by all the legislators: and there is no government that has not some mixture either of ceremonial vanity or of false opinion, that serves for a curb to keep the people in their duty. 'Tis for this that most of them have their originals and beginnings fabulous, and enriched with supernatural mysteries; 'tis this that has given credit to bastard religions, and caused them to be countenanced by men of understanding; and for this, that Numa and Sertorius, to possess their men with a better opinion of them, fed them with this foppery; one, that the nymph Egeria, the other that his white hind, brought them all their counsels from the gods. And the authority that Numa gave to his laws, under the title of the patronage of this goddess, Zoroaster, legislator of the Bactrians and Persians, gave to his under the name of the God Oromazis: Trismegistus, legislator of the Egyptians, under that of Mercury; Xamolxis, legislator of the Scythians, under that of Vesta; Charondas, legislator of the Chalcidians, under that of Saturn; Minos, legislator of the Candiots, under that of Jupiter; Lycurgus, legislator of the Lacedæmonians, under that of Apollo; and Draco and Solon, legislators of the Athenians, under that of Minerva. And every government has a god at

[1] "As tragic poets fly to some god when they cannot explain the issue of their argument."—Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, i. 20.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato*, iii. 26.

the head of it; the others falsely, that truly, which Moses set over the Jews at their departure out of Egypt. The religion of the Bedouins, as the Sire de Joinville reports, amongst other things, enjoined a belief that the soul of him amongst them who died for his prince, went into another body more happy, more beautiful, and more robust than the former; by which means they much more willingly ventured their lives:—

> "In ferrum mens prona viris, animæque capaces
> Mortis, et ignavum est redituræ parcere vitæ."[1]

This is a very comfortable belief, however erroneous. Every nation has many such examples of its own; but this subject would require a treatise by itself.

To add one word more to my former discourse, I would advise the ladies no longer to call that honour which is but their duty:—

> "Ut enim consuetudo loquitur, id solum dicitur honestum, quod est populari fama gloriosum"[2];

their duty is the mark, their honour but the outward rind. Neither would I advise them to give this excuse for payment of their denial: for I presuppose that their intentions, their desire, and will, which are things wherein their honour is not at all concerned, forasmuch as nothing thereof appears without, are much better regulated than the effects:—

> "Quæ quia non liceat, non facit, illa facit"[3]:

The offence, both towards God and in the conscience, would be as great to desire as to do it;

[1] "Men's minds are prone to the sword, and their souls able to bear death; and it is base to spare a life that will be renewed."—Lucan, i. 461.

[2] "As custom puts it, that only is called honest which is glorious by the public voice."—Cicero, *De Finibus*, ii. 15.

[3] "She who only refuses, because 'tis forbidden, consents."—Ovid, *Amor.*, ii. 4, 4.

and, besides, they are actions so private and secret of themselves, as would be easily enough kept from the knowledge of others, wherein the honour consists, if they had not another respect to their duty, and the affection they bear to chastity, for itself. Every woman of honour will much rather choose to lose her honour than to hurt her conscience.

CHAPTER XVII

OF PRESUMPTION

THERE is another sort of glory, which is the having too good an opinion of our own worth. 'Tis an inconsiderate affection with which we flatter ourselves, and that represents us to ourselves other than we truly are: like the passion of love, that lends beauties and graces to the object, and makes those who are caught by it, with a depraved and corrupt judgment, consider the thing which they love other and more perfect than it is.

I would not, nevertheless, for fear of failing on this side, that a man should not know himself aright, or think himself less than he is; the judgment ought in all things to maintain its rights; 'tis all the reason in the world he should discern in himself, as well as in others, what truth sets before him; if it be Cæsar, let him boldly think himself the greatest captain in the world. We are nothing but ceremony: ceremony carries us away, and we leave the substance of things: we hold by the branches, and quit the trunk and the body; we have taught the ladies to blush when they hear that but named which they are not at all afraid to do: we dare not call our members by their

right names, yet are not afraid to employ them in all sorts of debauchery: ceremony forbids us to express by words things that are lawful and natural, and we obey it: reason forbids us to do things unlawful and ill, and nobody obeys it. I find myself here fettered by the laws of ceremony; for it neither permits a man to speak well of himself, nor ill: we will leave her there for this time.

They whom fortune (call it good or ill) has made to pass their lives in some eminent degree, may by their public actions manifest what they are; but they whom she has only employed in the crowd, and of whom nobody will say a word unless they speak themselves, are to be excused if they take the boldness to speak of themselves to such as are interested to know them; by the example of Lucilius:—

> "Ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim
> Credebat libris, neque si male cesserat, usquam
> Decurrens alio, neque si bene: quo fit, ut omnis,
> Votivâ pateat veluti descripta tabellâ
> Vita senis"[1];

he always committed to paper his actions and thoughts, and there portrayed himself such as he found himself to be:—

"Nec id Rutilio et Scauro citra fidem, aut obtrectationi fuit."[2]

I remember, then, that from my infancy there was observed in me I know not what kind of carriage and behaviour, that seemed to relish of pride and arrogance. I will say this, by the way,

[1] "He formerly confided his secret thoughts to his books, as to tried friends, and for good and evil, resorted not elsewhere: hence it came to pass, that the old man's life is there all seen as on a votive tablet."—Horace, *Sat.*, ii. 1, 30.

[2] "Nor was this considered a breach of good faith or a disparagement to Rutilius or Scaurus."—Tacitus, *Agricola*, c. 1.

that it is not unreasonable to suppose that we have qualities and inclinations so much our own, and so incorporate in us, that we have not the means to feel and recognise them: and of such natural inclinations the body will retain a certain bent, without our knowledge or consent. It was an affectation conformable with his beauty that made Alexander carry his head on one side, and caused Alcibiades to lisp; Julius Cæsar scratched his head with one finger,[1] which is the fashion of a man full of troublesome thoughts; and Cicero, as I remember, was wont to pucker up his nose, a sign of a man given to scoffing; such motions as these may imperceptibly happen in us. There are other artificial ones which I meddle not with, as salutations and congees, by which men acquire, for the most part unjustly, the reputation of being humble and courteous: one may be humble out of pride. I am prodigal enough of my hat, especially in summer, and never am so saluted but that I pay it again from persons of what quality soever, unless they be in my own service. I should make it my request to some princes whom I know, that they would be more sparing of that ceremony, and bestow that courtesy where it is more due; for being so indiscreetly and indifferently conferred on all, it is thrown away to no purpose; if it be without respect of persons, it loses its effect. Amongst irregular deportment, let us not forget that haughty one of the Emperor Constantius,[2] who always in public held his head upright and stiff, without bending or turning on either side, not so much as to look upon those who saluted him on one side, planting his body in a rigid immovable posture, without

[1] Plutarch, in *Vitâ*, c. 1.
[2] Ammianus Marcellinus, xxi. 14.

suffering it to yield to the motion of his coach, not daring so much as to spit, blow his nose, or wipe his face before people. I know not whether the gestures that were observed in me were of this first quality, and whether I had really any occult proneness to this vice, as it might well be; and I cannot be responsible for the motions of the body; but as to the motions of the soul, I must here confess what I think of the matter.

This glory consists of two parts; the one in setting too great a value upon ourselves, and the other in setting too little a value upon others. As to the one, methinks these considerations ought, in the first place, to be of some force: I feel myself importuned by an error of the soul that displeases me, both as it is unjust, and still more as it is troublesome; I attempt to correct it, but I cannot root it out; and this is, that I lessen the just value of things that I possess, and overvalue things, because they are foreign, absent, and none of mine; this humour spreads very far. As the prerogative of the authority makes husbands look upon their own wives with a vicious disdain, and many fathers their children; so I, betwixt two equal merits, should always be swayed against my own; not so much that the jealousy of my advancement and bettering troubles my judgment, and hinders me from satisfying myself, as that of itself possession begets a contempt of what it holds and rules. Foreign governments, manners, and languages insinuate themselves into my esteem; and I am sensible that Latin allures me by the favour of its dignity to value it above its due, as it does with children, and the common sort of people: the domestic government, house, horse, of my neighbour, though no better than my own, I prize above

my own, because they are not mine. Besides that I am very ignorant in my own affairs, I am struck by the assurance that every one has of himself: whereas there is scarcely anything that I am sure I know, or that I dare be responsible to myself that I can do: I have not my means of doing anything in condition and ready, and am only instructed therein after the effect; as doubtful of my own force as I am of another's. Whence it comes to pass that if I happen to do anything commendable, I attribute it more to my fortune than industry, forasmuch as I design everything by chance and in fear. I have this, also, in general, that of all the opinions antiquity has held of men in gross, I most willingly embrace and adhere to those that most contemn and undervalue us, and most push us to naught; methinks, philosophy has never so fair a game to play as when it falls upon our vanity and presumption; when it most lays open our irresolution, weakness, and ignorance. I look upon the too good opinion that man has of himself to be the nursing mother of all the most false opinions, both public and private. Those people who ride astride upon the epicycle of Mercury, who see so far into the heavens, are worse to me than a tooth-drawer that comes to draw my teeth; for in my study, the subject of which is man, finding so great a variety of judgments, so profound a labyrinth of difficulties, one upon another, so great diversity and uncertainty, even in the school of wisdom itself, you may judge, seeing these people could not resolve upon the knowledge of themselves and their own condition, which is continually before their eyes, and within them, seeing they do not know how that moves which they themselves move, nor how to give us

a description of the springs they themselves govern and make use of, how can I believe them about the ebbing and flowing of the Nile? The curiosity of knowing things has been given to man for a scourge, says the Holy Scripture.[1]

But to return to what concerns myself; I think it would be very difficult for any other man to have a meaner opinion of himself; nay, for any other to have a meaner opinion of me than I have of myself: I look upon myself as one of the common sort, saving in this, that I have no better an opinion of myself; guilty of the meanest and most popular defects, but not disowning or excusing them; and I do not value myself upon any other account than because I know my own value. If there be any vanity in the case, 'tis superficially infused into me by the treachery of my complexion, and has no body that my judgment can discern: I am sprinkled, but not dyed. For in truth, as to the effects of the mind, there is no part of me, be it what it will, with which I am satisfied; and the approbation of others makes me not think the better of myself. My judgment is tender and nice, especially in things that concern myself; I ever repudiate myself, and feel myself float and waver by reason of my weakness. I have nothing of my own that satisfies my judgment. My sight is clear and regular enough, but, at working, it is apt to dazzle; as I most manifestly find in poetry: I love it infinitely, and am able to give a tolerable judgment of other men's works; but, in good earnest, when I apply myself to it, I play the child, and am not able to endure myself. A man

[1] The power, rather, of judging between good and evil, which the serpent in Genesis is made to declare capable of converting us into gods.

may play the fool in everything else, but not in poetry—

"Mediocribus esse poetis
Non dii, non homines, non concessere columnæ."[1]

I would to God this sentence was written over the doors of all our printers, to forbid the entrance of so many rhymesters!—

"Verum
Nihil securius est malo poeta."[2]

Why have not we such people?[3] Dionysius the father valued himself upon nothing so much as his poetry; at the Olympic games, with chariots surpassing all the others in magnificence, he sent also poets and musicians to present his verses, with tent and pavilions royally gilt and hung with tapestry. When his verses came to be recited, the excellence of the delivery at first attracted the attention of the people; but when they afterwards came to poise the meanness of the composition, they first entered into disdain, and continuing to nettle their judgments, presently proceeded to fury, and ran to pull down and tear to pieces all his pavilions: and, that his chariots neither performed anything to purpose in the race, and that the ship which brought back his people failed of making Sicily, and was by the tempest driven and wrecked upon the coast of Tarentum, they certainly believed was through the anger of the gods, incensed, as they themselves were, against the paltry poem; and even the mariners who escaped

[1] "Neither men, nor gods, nor columns permit mediocrity in poets." — Horace, *De Arte Poet.*, 372. The columns were the bookshops.

[2] "The truth is, that nothing is more confident than a bad poet." —Martial, xii. 63, 13.

[3] As those about to be mentioned.

from the wreck seconded this opinion of the people: to which also the oracle that foretold his death seemed to subscribe; which was, "that Dionysius should be near his end, when he should have overcome those who were better than himself," which he interpreted of the Carthaginians, who surpassed him in power; and having war with them, often declined the victory, not to incur the sense of this prediction; but he understood it ill; for the god indicated the time of the advantage, that by favour and injustice he obtained at Athens over the tragic poets, better than himself, having caused his own play called the Leneians to be acted in emulation; presently after which victory he died, and partly of the excessive joy he conceived at the success.[1]

What I find tolerable of mine, is not so really and in itself, but in comparison of other worse things, that I see well enough received. I envy the happiness of those who can please and hug themselves in what they do; for 'tis an easy thing to be so pleased, because a man extracts that pleasure from himself, especially if he be constant in his self-conceit. I know a poet, against whom the intelligent and the ignorant, abroad and at home, both heaven and earth exclaim that he has but very little notion of it; and yet, for all that, he has never a whit the worse opinion of himself; but is always falling upon some new piece, always contriving some new invention, and still persists in his opinion, by so much the more obstinately, as it only concerns him to maintain it.

[1] Diodorus Siculus, xv. 74. The play, however, was called the "Ransom of Hector." It was the games at which it was acted that were called Leneian; they were one of the four Dionysiac festivals.

My works are so far from pleasing me, that as often as I review them, they disgust me:—

"Cum relego, scripsisse pudet; quia plurima cerno,
Me quoque, qui feci, judice, digna lini."[1]

I have always an idea in my soul, and a sort of disturbed image which presents me as in a dream with a better form than that I have made use of; but I cannot catch it nor fit it to my purpose; and even that idea is but of the meaner sort. Hence I conclude that the productions of those great and rich souls of former times are very much beyond the utmost stretch of my imagination or my wish; their writings do not only satisfy and fill me, but they astound me, and ravish me with admiration; I judge of their beauty; I see it, if not to the utmost, yet so far at least as 'tis possible for me to aspire. Whatever I undertake, I owe a sacrifice to the Graces, as Plutarch says of some one,[2] to conciliate their favour:—

"Si quid enim placet,
Si quid dulce hominum sensibus influit,
Debentur lepidis omnia Gratiis."[3]

They abandon me throughout; all I write is rude; polish and beauty are wanting: I cannot set things off to any advantage; my handling adds nothing to the matter; for which reason I must have it forcible, very full, and that has lustre of its own. If I pitch upon subjects that are popular and gay, 'tis to follow my own inclination, who do not affect a grave and ceremonious wisdom, as the world

[1] "When I reperuse, I blush at what I have written; I ever see one passage after another that I, the author, being the judge, consider should be erased."—Ovid, *De Ponto*, i. 5, 15.

[2] Xenocrates in the *Precepts of Marriage*, c. 26.

[3] "If anything please that I write, if it infuse delight into men's minds, all is due to the charming Graces." The verses are probably by some modern poet.

does; and to make myself more sprightly, but not my style more wanton, which would rather have them grave and severe; at least if I may call that a style which is an inform and irregular way of speaking, a popular jargon, a proceeding without definition, division, conclusion, perplexed like that Amafanius and Rabirius.[1] I can neither please nor delight, nor even tickle my readers: the best story in the world is spoiled by my handling, and becomes flat; I cannot speak but in rough earnest, and am totally unprovided of that facility which I observe in many of my acquaintance, of entertaining the first comers and keeping a whole company in breath, or taking up the ear of a prince with all sorts of discourse without wearying themselves: they never want matter by reason of the faculty and grace they have in taking hold of the first thing that starts up, and accommodating it to the humour and capacity of those with whom they have to do. Princes do not much affect solid discourses, nor I to tell stories. The first and easiest reasons, which are commonly the best taken, I know not how to employ: I am an ill orator to the common sort. I am apt of everything to say the extremest that I know. Cicero is of opinion[2] that in treatises of philosophy the exordium is the hardest part; if this be true, I am wise in sticking to the conclusion. And yet we are to know how to wind the string to all notes, and the sharpest is that which is the most seldom touched. There is at least as much perfection in elevating an empty as in supporting a weighty thing. A man must sometimes superficially handle things, and sometimes push them home. I know very well that most men keep

[1] Cicero, *Acad.*, I. 2.

[2] *De Universo*, c. 2.

themselves in this lower form from not conceiving things otherwise than by this outward bark; but I likewise know that the greatest masters, and Xenophon and Plato are often seen to stoop to this low and popular manner of speaking and treating of things, but supporting it with graces which never fail them.

Farther, my language has nothing in it that is facile and polished; 'tis rough, free, and irregular, and as such pleases, if not my judgment, at all events my inclination, but I very well perceive that I sometimes give myself too much rein, and that by endeavouring to avoid art and affectation I fall into the other inconvenience:—

> "Brevis esse laboro,
> Obscurus fio."[1]

Plato says,[2] that the long or the short are not properties, that either take away or give value to language. Should I attempt to follow the other more moderate, united, and regular style, I should never attain to it; and though the short round periods of Sallust best suit with my humour, yet I find Cæsar much grander and harder to imitate; and though my inclination would rather prompt me to imitate Seneca's way of writing, yet I do nevertheless more esteem that of Plutarch. Both in doing and speaking I simply follow my own natural way; whence, peradventure, it falls out that I am better at speaking than writing. Motion and action animate words, especially in those who lay about them briskly, as I do, and grow hot. The comportment, the countenance, the voice, the robe,

[1] "Endeavouring to be brief, I become obscure."—Hor., *De Art. Poet.*, 25.
[2] *Republic*, x.

the place, will set off some things that of themselves would appear no better than prating. Messalla complains in Tacitus[1] of the straitness of some garments in his time, and of the fashion of the benches where the orators were to declaim, that were a disadvantage to their eloquence.

My French tongue is corrupted, both in the pronunciation and otherwise, by the barbarism of my country. I never saw a man who was a native of any of the provinces on this side of the kingdom who had not a twang of his place of birth,[2] and that was not offensive to ears that were purely French. And yet it is not that I am so perfect in my Perigordin: for I can no more speak it than High Dutch, nor do I much care. 'Tis a language (as the rest about me on every side, of Poitou, Xaintonge, Angoumousin, Limousin, Auvergne), a poor, drawling, scurvy language. There is, indeed, above us towards the mountains a sort of Gascon spoken, that I am mightily taken with: blunt, brief, significant, and in truth a more manly and military language than any other I am acquainted with, as sinewy, powerful, and pertinent as the French is graceful, neat, and luxuriant.

As to the Latin, which was given me for my mother tongue, I have by discontinuance lost the use of speaking it, and, indeed, of writing it too, wherein I formerly had a particular reputation,[3] by which you may see how inconsiderable I am on that side.

Beauty is a thing of great recommendation in the correspondence amongst men; 'tis the first means of acquiring the favour and good liking of one

[1] *De Oratoribus*, towards the end.
[2] Qui ne sentist bien evidemment son ramage.
[3] Je me faisois appeller Maistre Jehan.

another, and no man is so barbarous and morose as not to perceive himself in some sort struck with its attraction. The body has a great share in our being, has an eminent place there, and therefore its structure and composition are of very just consideration. They who go about to disunite and separate our two principal parts from one another are to blame; we must, on the contrary, reunite and rejoin them. We must command the soul not to withdraw and entertain itself apart, not to despise and abandon the body (neither can she do it but by some apish counterfeit), but to unite herself close to it, to embrace, cherish, assist, govern, and advise it, and to bring it back and set it into the true way when it wanders; in sum, to espouse and be a husband to it, so that their effects may not appear to be diverse and contrary, but uniform and concurring. Christians have a particular instruction concerning this connection, for they know that the Divine justice embraces this society and juncture of body and soul, even to the making the body capable of eternal rewards; and that God has an eye to the whole man's ways, and wills that he receive entire chastisement or reward according to his demerits or merits. The sect of the Peripatetics, of all sects the most sociable, attribute to wisdom this sole care equally to provide for the good of these two associate parts: and the other sects, in not sufficiently applying themselves to the consideration of this mixture, show themselves to be divided, one for the body and the other for the soul, with equal error, and to have lost sight of their subject, which is Man, and their guide, which they generally confess to be Nature. The first distinction that ever was amongst men, and the first consideration that gave

some pre-eminence over others, 'tis likely was the advantage of beauty :—

> "Agros divisere atque dedere
> Pro facie cujusque, et viribus ingenioque;
> Nam facies multum valuit, viresque vigebant."[1]

Now I am of something lower than the middle stature, a defect that not only borders upon deformity, but carries withal a great deal of inconvenience along with it, especially for those who are in office and command; for the authority which a graceful presence and a majestic mien beget is wanting. C. Marius did not willingly enlist any soldiers who were not six feet high.[2] The Courtier[3] has, indeed, reason to desire a moderate stature in the gentlemen he is setting forth, rather than any other, and to reject all strangeness that should make him be pointed at. But if I were to choose whether this medium must be rather below than above the common standard, I would not have it so in a soldier. Little men, says Aristotle,[4] are pretty, but not handsome: and greatness of soul is discovered in a great body, as beauty is in a conspicuous stature: the Ethiopians and Indians, says he,[5] in choosing their kings and magistrates, had regard to the beauty and stature of their persons. They had reason; for it creates respect in those who follow them, and is a terror to the enemy, to see a leader of a brave and goodly stature march at the head of a battalion :—

[1] "They distributed and conferred the lands to every man according to his beauty and strength and understanding, for beauty was much esteemed and strength was in favour."—Lucretius, v. 1109.

[2] Vegetius, i. 5.

[3] *Il Cortegiano* of Balthasar Castiglione.

[4] *Nichom. Ethics*, iv. 7.

[5] *Politics*, iv. 4.

"Ipse inter primos præstanti corpore Turnus
Vertitur arma, tenens, et toto vertice supra est."[1]

Our holy and heavenly king, of whom every circumstance is most carefully and with the greatest religion and reverence to be observed, has not himself rejected bodily recommendation, "Speciosus formâ præ filiis hominum."[2] And Plato,[3] together with temperance and fortitude, requires beauty in the conservators of his republic. It would vex you that a man should apply himself to you amongst your servants to inquire where Monsieur is, and that you should only have the remainder of the compliment of the hat that is made to your barber or your secretary; as it happened to poor Philopœmen,[4] who arriving the first of all his company at an inn where he was expected, the hostess, who knew him not, and saw him an unsightly fellow, employed him to go help her maids a little to draw water, and make a fire against Philopœmen's coming; the gentlemen of his train arriving presently after, and surprised to see him busy in this fine employment, for he failed not to obey his landlady's command, asked him what he was doing there: "I am," said he, "paying the penalty of my ugliness." The other beauties belong to women; the beauty of stature is the only beauty of men. Where there is a contemptible stature, neither the largeness and roundness of the forehead, nor the whiteness and sweetness of the eyes, nor the moderate proportion of the nose, nor the littleness of the ears and mouth, nor the evenness and whiteness of the teeth, nor the thickness

[1] "In the first rank marches Turnus, brandishing his weapon, taller by a head than all the rest."—Virgil, *Æneid*, vii. 783.
[2] "He is fairer than the children of men."—Psalm xlv. 3.
[3] *Republic*, vii.
[4] Plutarch, in *Vitâ*, c. i.

of a well-set brown beard, shining like the husk of a chestnut, nor curled hair, nor the just proportion of the head, nor a fresh complexion, nor a pleasing air of a face, nor a body without any offensive scent, nor the just proportion of limbs, can make a handsome man. I am, as to the rest, strong and well knit; my face is not puffed, but full, and my complexion betwixt jovial and melancholic, moderately sanguine and hot:—

"Unde rigent setis mihi crura, et pectora villis"[1];

my health vigorous and sprightly, even to a well advanced age, and rarely troubled with sickness. Such I was, for I do not now make any account of myself, now that I am engaged in the avenues of old age, being already past forty:—

"Minutatim vires et robur adultum
Frangit, et in partem pejorem liquitur ætas"[2]:

what shall be from this time forward, will be but a half-being, and no more me: I every day escape and steal away from myself:—

"Singula de nobis anni prædantur euntes."[3]

Agility and address I never had, and yet am the son of a very active and sprightly father, who continued to be so to an extreme old age. I have scarce known any man of his condition, his equal in all bodily exercises, as I have seldom met with any who have not excelled me, except in running, at which I was pretty good. In music or singing, for

[1] "Whence 'tis my legs and breast bristle with hair."—Martial, ii. 36, 5.

[2] "Time by degrees breaks our strength and makes us grow feeble."—Lucretius, ii. 1131.

[3] "Of the fleeting years each steals something from me."—Horace, *Ep.*, ii. 2, 55.

which I have a very unfit voice, or to play on any sort of instrument, they could never teach me anything. In dancing, tennis, or wrestling, I could never arrive to more than an ordinary pitch; in swimming, fencing, vaulting, and leaping, to none at all. My hands are so clumsy that I cannot even write so as to read it myself, so that I had rather do what I have scribbled over again, than take upon me the trouble to make it out.[1] I do not read much better than I write, and feel that I weary my auditors: otherwise I am not a bad clerk. I cannot decently fold up a letter, nor could ever make a pen, or carve at table worth a pin, nor saddle a horse, nor carry a hawk and fly her, nor hunt the dogs, nor lure a hawk, nor speak to a horse. In fine, my bodily qualities are very well suited to those of my soul; there is nothing sprightly, only a full and firm vigour: I am patient enough of labour and pains, but it is only when I go voluntary to work, and only so long as my own desire prompts me to it:—

"Molliter austerum studio fallente laborem"[2]:

otherwise, if I am not allured with some pleasure, or have other guide than my own pure and free inclination, I am good for nothing: for I am of a humour that, life and health excepted, there is nothing for which I will bite my nails, and that I will purchase at the price of torment of mind and constraint:—

"Tanti mihi non sit opaci
Omnis arena Tagi, quodque in mare volvitur aurum."[3]

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[1] This is a pleasant hyperbole, as Montaigne really wrote for his time a fairly legible hand, although he is occasionally somewhat lax or careless in his orthography and punctuation.

[2] "Study softly beguiling severe labour."—Horace, *Sat.*, ii. 2, 12.

[3] "I would not buy rich Tagus sands so dear, nor all the gold that lies in the sea."—Juvenal, *Sat.*, iii. 54.

Extremely idle, extremely given up to my own inclination both by nature and art, I would as willingly lend a man my blood as my pains. I have a soul free and entirely its own, and accustomed to guide itself after its own fashion; having hitherto never had either master or governor imposed upon me: I have walked as far as I would, and at the pace that best pleased myself; this is it that has rendered me unfit for the service of others, and has made me of no use to any one but myself.

Nor was there any need of forcing my heavy and lazy disposition; for being born to such a fortune as I had reason to be contented with (a reason, nevertheless, that a thousand others of my acquaintance would have rather made use of for a plank upon which to pass over in search of higher fortune, to tumult and disquiet), and with as much intelligence as I required, I sought for no more, and also got no more:—

> "Non agimur tumidis velis Aquilone secundo,
> Non tamen adversis ætatem ducimus Austris;
> Viribus, ingenio, specie, virtute, loco, re,
> Extremi primorum, extremis usque priores."[1]

I had only need of what was sufficient to content me: which nevertheless is a government of soul, to take it right, equally difficult in all sorts of conditions, and that, of custom, we see more easily found in want than in abundance: forasmuch, peradventure, as according to the course of our other passions, the desire of riches is more sharpened by their use than by the need of them: and the virtue of moderation more rare than that of patience; and I

[1] "The northern wind does not agitate our sails; nor Auster trouble our course with storms. In strength, talent, figure, virtue, honour, wealth, we are short of the foremost, but before the last."—Horace, *Ep.*, ii. 2, 201.

never had anything to desire, but happily to enjoy the estate that God by His bounty had put into my hands. I have never known anything of trouble, and have had little to do in anything but the management of my own affairs: or, if I have, it has been upon condition to do it at my own leisure and after my own method; committed to my trust by such as had a confidence in me, who did not importune me, and who knew my humour; for good horsemen will make shift to get service out of a rusty and broken-winded jade.

Even my infancy was trained up after a gentle and free manner, and exempt from any rigorous subjection. All this has helped me to a complexion delicate and incapable of solicitude, even to that degree that I love to have my losses and the disorders wherein I am concerned, concealed from me. In the account of my expenses, I put down what my negligence costs me in feeding and maintaining it:—

> "Hæc nempe supersunt,
> Quæ dominum fallunt, quæ prosunt furibus."[1]

I love not to know what I have, that I may be less sensible of my loss; I entreat those who serve me, where affection and integrity are absent, to deceive me with something like a decent appearance. For want of constancy enough to support the shock of adverse accidents to which we are subject, and of patience seriously to apply myself to the management of my affairs, I nourish as much as I can this in myself, wholly leaving all to fortune "to take all things at the worst, and to resolve to bear that worst with temper and patience"; that is the only

[1] "That overplus, which the owner knows not of, but which benefits the thieves."—Horace, *Ep.*, i. 6, 45.

thing I aim at, and to which I apply my whole meditation. In a danger, I do not so much consider how I shall escape it, as of how little importance it is, whether I escape it or no: should I be left dead upon the place, what matter? Not being able to govern events, I govern myself, and apply myself to them, if they will not apply themselves to me. I have no great art to evade, escape from or force fortune, and by prudence to guide and incline things to my own bias. I have still less patience to undergo the troublesome and painful care therein required; and the most uneasy condition for me is to be suspended on urgent occasions, and to be agitated betwixt hope and fear.

Deliberation, even in things of lightest moment, is very troublesome to me; and I find my mind more put to it to undergo the various tumblings and tossings of doubt and consultation, than to set up its rest and to acquiesce in whatever shall happen after the die is thrown. Few passions break my sleep, but of deliberations, the least will do it. As in roads, I preferably avoid those that are sloping and slippery, and put myself into the beaten track how dirty or deep soever, where I can fall no lower, and there seek my safety: so I love misfortunes that are purely so, that do not torment and tease me with the uncertainty of their growing better; but that at the first push plunge me directly into the worst that can be expected:

"Dubia plus torquent mala."[1]

In events I carry myself like a man; in conduct, like a child. The fear of the fall more fevers me than the fall itself. The game is not worth the candle. The covetous man fares worse with his

[1] "Doubtful ills plague us worst."—Seneca, *Agamemnon*, iii. 1, 29.

passion than the poor, and the jealous man than the cuckold; and a man ofttimes loses more by defending his vineyard than if he gave it up. The lowest walk is the safest; 'tis the seat of constancy; you have there need of no one but yourself; 'tis there founded and wholly stands upon its own basis. Has not this example of a gentleman very well known, some air of philosophy in it? He married, being well advanced in years, having spent his youth in good fellowship, a great talker and a great jeerer, calling to mind how much the subject of cuckoldry had given him occasion to talk and scoff at others. To prevent them from paying him in his own coin, he married a wife from a place where any one finds what he wants for his money: "Good morrow, strumpet"; "Good morrow, cuckold"; and there was not anything wherewith he more commonly and openly entertained those who came to see him than with this design of his, by which he stopped the private chattering of mockers, and blunted all the point from this reproach.

As to ambition, which is neighbour, or rather daughter, to presumption, fortune, to advance me, must have come and taken me by the hand; for to trouble myself for an uncertain hope, and to have submitted myself to all the difficulties that accompany those who endeavour to bring themselves into credit in the beginning of their progress, I could never have done it:—

"Spem pretio non emo."[1]

I apply myself to what I see and to what I have in my hand, and go not very far from the shore:—

"Alter remus aquas, alter tibi radat arenas"[2]:

[1] "I do not purchase hope at a price."—Terence, *Adelphi*, ii. 3, 11.

[2] "One oar may cut the sea, the other the sands."—Propertius, iii. 3, 23.

and besides, a man rarely arrives at these advancements but in first hazarding what he has of his own; and I am of opinion that if a man have sufficient to maintain him in the condition wherein he was born and brought up, 'tis a great folly to hazard that upon the uncertainty of augmenting it. He to whom fortune has denied whereon to set his foot, and to settle a quiet and composed way of living, is to be excused if he venture what he has, because, happen what will, necessity puts him upon shifting for himself:—

"Capienda rebus in malis præceps via est"[1]:

and I rather excuse a younger brother for exposing what his friends have left him to the courtesy of fortune, than him with whom the honour of his family is entrusted, who cannot be necessitous but by his own fault. I have found a much shorter and more easy way, by the advice of the good friends I had in my younger days, to free myself from any such ambition, and to sit still:—

"Cui sit conditio dulcis sine pulvere palmæ"[2]:

judging rightly enough of my own strength, that it was not capable of any great matters; and calling to mind the saying of the late Chancellor Olivier,[3] that the French were like monkeys that swarm up a tree from branch to branch, and never stop till they come to the highest, and there shew their breech.[4]

[1] "A course is to be taken in bad cases."—Seneca, *Agamemnon*, ii. 1, 47.

[2] "What condition can compare with that where one has gained the palm without the dust of the course."—Horace, *Ep.*, i. 1, 51.

[3] He died in 1560.

[4] This bears on the proverb, "The higher the ape goes, the more he shews his tail."

"Turpe est, quod nequeas, capiti committere pondus,
Et pressum inflexo mox dare terga genu."[1]

I should find the best qualities I have useless in this age; the facility of my manners would have been called weakness and negligence; my faith and conscience, scrupulosity and superstition; my liberty and freedom would have been reputed troublesome, inconsiderate, and rash. Ill-luck is good for something. It is good to be born in a very depraved age; for so, in comparison of others, you shall be reputed virtuous good cheap; he who in our days is but a parricide and a sacrilegious person is an honest man and a man of honour:—

"Nunc, si depositum non inficiatur amicus,
Si reddat veterem cum tota ærugine follem,
Prodigiosa fides, et Tuscis digna libellis,
Quæque coronata lustrari debeat agna"[2]:

and never was time or place wherein princes might propose to themselves more assured or greater rewards for virtue and justice. The first who shall make it his business to get himself into favour and esteem by those ways, I am much deceived if he do not and by the best title outstrip his competitors: force and violence can do something, but not always all. We see merchants, country justices, and artisans go cheek by jowl with the best gentry in valour and military knowledge: they perform honourable actions, both in public engagements and private quarrels; they fight duels, they defend towns in our present wars; a prince stifles his

[1] "It is a shame to load the head so that it cannot bear the burthen, and the knees give way."—Propertius, iii. 9, 5.

[2] "Now, if a friend does not deny his trust, but restores the old purse with all its rust; 'tis a prodigious faith, worthy to be enrolled in amongst the Tuscan annals, and a crowned lamb should be sacrificed to such exemplary integrity."—Juvenal, *Sat.*, xiii. 611.

special recommendation, renown, in this crowd; let him shine bright in humanity, truth, loyalty, temperance, and especially in justice; marks rare, unknown, and exiled; 'tis by no other means but by the sole goodwill of the people that he can do his business; and no other qualities can attract their goodwill like those, as being of the greatest utility to them:—

"Nil est tam populare, quam bonitas."[1]

By this standard I had been great and rare, just as I find myself now pigmy and vulgar by the standard of some past ages, wherein, if no other better qualities concurred, it was ordinary and common to see a man moderate in his revenges, gentle in resenting injuries, religious of his word, neither double nor supple, nor accommodating his faith to the will of others, or the turns of the times: I would rather see all affairs go to wreck and ruin than falsify my faith to secure them. For as to this new virtue of feigning and dissimulation, which is now in so great credit, I mortally hate it; and of all vices find none that evidences so much baseness and meanness of spirit. 'Tis a cowardly and servile humour to hide and disguise a man's self under a visor, and not to dare to show himself what he is; 'tis by this our servants are trained up to treachery; being brought up to speak what is not true, they make no conscience of a lie. A generous heart ought not to belie its own thoughts; it will make itself seen within; all there is good, or at least human. Aristotle[2] reputes it the office of magnanimity openly and professedly to love and hate; to judge and speak with all freedom; and not to value

[1] "Nothing is so popular as an agreeable manner."—Cicero, *Pro Ligar.*, c. 12.

[2] *Nichom. Ethics*, iv. 8.

the approbation or dislike of others in comparison of truth. Apollonius[1] said it was for slaves to lie, and for freemen to speak truth: 'tis the chief and fundamental part of virtue; we must love it for itself. He who speaks truth because he is obliged so to do, and because it serves him, and who is not afraid to lie when it signifies nothing to anybody, is not sufficiently true. My soul naturally abominates lying, and hates the very thought of it. I have an inward shame and a sharp remorse, if sometimes a lie escapes me: as sometimes it does, being surprised by occasions that allow me no premeditation. A man must not always tell all, for that were folly: but what a man says should be what he thinks, otherwise 'tis knavery. I do not know what advantage men pretend to by eternally counterfeiting and dissembling, if not never to be believed when they speak the truth; it may once or twice pass with men; but to profess the concealing their thought, and to brag, as some of our princes have done, that they would burn their shirts if they knew their true intentions, which was a saying of the ancient Metellius of Macedon[2]; and that they who know not how to dissemble know not how to rule,[3] is to give warning to all who have anything to do with them, that all they say is nothing but lying and deceit:—

"Quo quis versutior et callidior est, hoc invisior et suspectior, detracto opinione probitatis"[4]:

it were a great simplicity in any one to lay any

[1] Philostratus, p. 409 of ed. of 1709.
[2] Aurelius Victor, *De. Vir. Illust.*, c. 66.
[3] It was a saying of Louis XI.
[4] "By how much any one is more subtle and cunning, by so much is he hated and suspected, the opinion of his integrity being withdrawn."—Cicero, *De Off.*, ii. 9.

stress either on the countenance or word of a man who has put on a resolution to be always another thing without than he is within, as Tiberius did; and I cannot conceive what part such persons can have in conversation with men, seeing they produce nothing that is received as true: whoever is disloyal to truth is the same to falsehood also.

Those of our time who have considered in the establishment of the duty of a prince the good of his affairs only, and have preferred that to the care of his faith and conscience, might have something to say to a prince whose affairs fortune had put into such a posture that he might for ever establish them by only once breaking his word: but it will not go so; they often buy in the same market; they make more than one peace and enter into more than one treaty in their lives. Gain tempts to the first breach of faith, and almost always presents itself, as in all other ill acts, sacrileges, murders, rebellions, treasons, as being undertaken for some kind of advantage; but this first gain has infinite mischievous consequences, throwing this prince out of all correspondence and negotiation, by this example of infidelity. Soliman, of the Ottoman race, a race not very solicitous of keeping their words or compacts, when, in my infancy, he made his army land at Otranto, being informed that Mercurino de' Gratinare and the inhabitants of Castro were detained prisoners, after having surrendered the place, contrary to the articles of their capitulation, sent orders to have them set at liberty, saying, that having other great enterprises in hand in those parts, the disloyalty, though it carried a show of present utility, would for the future bring on him a disrepute and distrust of infinite prejudice.

Now, for my part, I had rather be troublesome and indiscreet than a flatterer and a dissembler. I confess that there may be some mixture of pride and obstinacy in keeping myself so upright and open as I do, without any consideration of others; and methinks I am a little too free, where I ought least to be so, and that I grow hot by the opposition of respect; and it may be also, that I suffer myself to follow the propension of my own nature for want of art; using the same liberty, speech, and countenance towards great persons, that I bring with me from my own house: I am sensible how much it declines towards incivility and indiscretion: but, besides that I am so bred, I have not a wit supple enough to evade a sudden question, and to escape by some evasion, nor to feign a truth, nor memory enough to retain it so feigned; nor, truly, assurance enough to maintain it, and so play the brave out of weakness. And therefore it is that I abandon myself to candour, always to speak as I think, both by complexion and design, leaving the event to fortune. Aristippus was wont to say,[1] that the principal benefit he had extracted from philosophy was that he spoke freely and openly to all.

Memory is a faculty of wonderful use, and without which the judgment can very hardly perform its office: for my part I have none at all. What any one will propound to me, he must do it piecemeal, for to answer a speech consisting of several heads I am not able. I could not receive a commission by word of mouth without a note-book. And when I have a speech of consequence to make, if it be long, I am reduced to the miserable necessity of getting by heart word for word, what I am to say; I should otherwise have neither method nor

1 Dioge es Laertius, ii. 68.

assurance, being in fear that my memory would play me a slippery trick. But this way is no less difficult to me than the other; I must have three hours to learn three verses. And besides, in a work of a man's own, the liberty and authority of altering the order, of changing a word, incessantly varying the matter, makes it harder to stick in the memory of the author. The more I mistrust it the worse it is; it serves me best by chance; I must solicit it negligently; for if I press it, 'tis confused, and after it once begins to stagger, the more I sound it, the more it is perplexed; it serves me at its own hour, not at mine.

And the same defect I find in my memory, I find also in several other parts. I fly command, obligation, and constraint; that which I can otherwise naturally and easily do, if I impose it upon myself by an express and strict injunction, I cannot do it. Even the members of my body, which have a more particular jurisdiction of their own, sometimes refuse to obey me, if I enjoin them a necessary service at a certain hour. This tyrannical and compulsive appointment baffles them; they shrink up either through fear or spite, and fall into a trance. Being once in a place where it is looked upon as barbarous discourtesy not to pledge those who drink to you, though I had there all liberty allowed me, I tried to play the good fellow, out of respect to the ladies who were there, according to the custom of the country; but there was pleasure! for this pressure and preparation, to force myself contrary to my custom and inclination, so stopped my throat that I could not swallow one drop, and was deprived of drinking so much as with my meat; I found myself gorged, and my thirst quenched by the quantity of drink that my

imagination had swallowed. This effect is most manifest in such as have the most vehement and powerful imagination: but it is natural, notwithstanding, and there is no one who does not in some measure feel it. They offered an excellent archer, condemned to die, to save his life, if he would show some notable proof of his art, but he refused to try, fearing lest the too great contention of his will should make him shoot wide, and that instead of saving his life, he should also lose the reputation he had got of being a good marksman. A man who thinks of something else, will not fail to take over and over again the same number and measure of steps, even to an inch, in the place where he walks; but if he made it his business to measure and count them, he will find that what he did by nature and accident, he cannot so exactly do by design.

My library, which is a fine one among those of the village type, is situated in a corner of my house; if anything comes into my head that I have a mind to search or to write, lest I should forget it in but going across the court, I am fain to commit it to the memory of some other. If I venture in speaking to digress never so little from my subject, I am infallibly lost, which is the reason that I keep myself, in discourse, strictly close. I am forced to call the men who serve me either by the names of their offices or their country; for names are very hard for me to remember. I can tell indeed that there are three syllables, that it has a harsh sound, and that it begins or ends with such a letter; but that's all; and if I should live long, I do not doubt but I should forget my own name, as some others have done. Messala Corvinus was two years without any trace of

memory, which is also said of Georgius Trapezuntius. For my own interest, I often meditate what a kind of life theirs was, and if, without this faculty, I should have enough left to support me with any manner of ease; and prying narrowly into it, I fear that this privation, if absolute, destroys all the other functions of the soul:—

"Plenus rimarum sum, hac atque illac perfluo."[1]

It has befallen me more than once to forget the watchword I had three hours before given or received, and to forget where I had hidden my purse; whatever Cicero is pleased to say,[2] I help myself to lose what I have a particular care to lock safe up:—

"Memoria certe non modo philosophiam sed omnis vitæ usum, omnesque artes, una maxime continet."[3]

Memory is the receptacle and case of science: and therefore mine being so treacherous, if I know little, I cannot much complain. I know, in general, the names of the arts, and of what they treat, but nothing more. I turn over books; I do not study them. What I retain I no longer recognise as another's; 'tis only what my judgment has made its advantage of, the discourses and imaginations in which it has been instructed: the author, place, words, and other circumstances, I immediately forget; and I am so excellent at forgetting, that I no less forget my own writings and compositions than the rest. I am very often quoted to myself, and am not aware of it. Whoever should inquire of me where I had the

[1] "I'm full of chinks, and leak out every way."—Terence, *Eunuchus*, ii. 2, 23.

[2] *De Senectute*, c. 7.

[3] "It is certain that memory contains not only philosophy, but all the arts and all that appertain to the use of life."—Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 7.

verses and examples, that I have here huddled together, would puzzle me to tell him, and yet I have not borrowed them but from famous and known authors, not contenting myself that they were rich, if I, moreover, had them not from rich and honourable hands, where there is a concurrence of authority with reason. It is no great wonder if my book run the same fortune that other books do, if my memory lose what I have written as well as what I have read, and what I give,[1] as well as what I receive.

Besides the defect of memory, I have others which very much contribute to my ignorance; I have a slow and heavy wit, the least cloud stops its progress, so that, for example, I never propose to it any never so easy a riddle that it could find out; there is not the least idle subtlety that will not gravel me; in games, where wit is required, as chess, draughts, and the like, I understand no more than the common movements. I have a slow and perplexed apprehension, but what it once apprehends, it apprehends well, for the time it retains it. My sight is perfect, entire, and discovers at a very great distance, but is soon weary and heavy at work, which occasions that I cannot read long, but am forced to have one to read to me. The younger Pliny[2] can inform such as have not experimented it themselves, how important an impediment this is to those who devote themselves to this employment.

There is no so wretched and coarse a soul, wherein some particular faculty is not seen to shine;

[1] Montaigne certainly not only repeats himself, but does so in the same paper, and within a page or so; and very probably his memory in this way was treacherous. Yet he seems to have attended to his public duties with great punctuality, and in his official correspondence there is no trace of this failing, or allusion to it.

[2] Epist., v. 3.

no soul so buried in sloth and ignorance, but it will sally at one end or another; and how it comes to pass that a man blind and asleep to everything else, shall be found sprightly, clear, and excellent in some one particular effect, we are to inquire of our masters: but the beautiful souls are they that are universal, open, and ready for all things; if not instructed, at least capable of being so: which I say to accuse my own; for whether it be through infirmity or negligence (and to neglect that which lies at our feet, which we have in our hands, and what nearest concerns the use of life, is far from my doctrine) there is not a soul in the world so awkward as mine, and so ignorant of many common things, and such as a man cannot without shame fail to know. I must give some examples.

I was born and bred up in the country, and amongst husbandmen. I have had business and husbandry in my own hands ever since my predecessors, who were lords of the estate I now enjoy, left me to succeed them; and yet I can neither cast accounts, nor reckon my counters: most of our current money I do not know, nor the difference betwixt one grain and another, either growing or in the barn, if it be not too apparent, and scarcely can distinguish between the cabbage and lettuce in my garden. I do not so much as understand the names of the chief instruments of husbandry, nor the most ordinary elements of agriculture, which the very children know: much less the mechanic arts, traffic, merchandise, the variety and nature of fruits, wines, and viands, nor how to make a hawk fly, nor to physic a horse or a dog. And, since I must publish my whole shame, 'tis not above a month ago, that I was trapped to my ignorance of the use of leaven to make bread, or to what end it was to

keep wine in the vat. They conjectured of old at Athens,[1] an aptitude for the mathematics in him they saw ingeniously bavin up a burthen of brush-wood. In earnest, they would draw a quite contrary conclusion from me, for give me the whole provision and necessaries of a kitchen, I should starve. By these features of my confession men may imagine others to my prejudice: but whatever I deliver myself to be, provided it be such as I really am, I have my end; neither will I make any excuse for committing to paper such mean and frivolous things as these: the meanness of the subject compels me to it. They may, if they please, accuse my project, but not my progress: so it is that without anybody's needing to tell me, I sufficiently see of how little weight and value all this is, and the folly of my design: 'tis enough that my judgment does not contradict itself, of which these are the essays:—

> "Nasutus sis usque licet, sis denique nasus,
> Quantum noluerit ferre rogatus Atlas;
> Et possis ipsum tu deridere Latinum,
> Non potes in nugas dicere plura meas,
> Ipse ego quam dixi: quid dentem dente juvabit
> Rodere? carne opus est, si satur esse velis.
> Ne perdas operam; qui se mirantur, in illos
> Virus habe; nos hæc novimus esse nihil."[2]

I am not obliged not to utter absurdities, provided I am not deceived in them and know them to be

[1] Diogenes Laertius relates this story (ix. 58) of Protagoras of Abdera, and so does Aulus Gellius, v. 3. Montaigne's memory probably failed him as to the locality.

[2] "Let your nose be as keen as it will, be all nose, and even a nose so great that Atlas will refuse to bear it if asked. Could you even excel Latinus in scoffing; against my trifles you could say no more than I myself have said: then to what end contend tooth against tooth? You must have flesh, if you want to be full; lose not your labour then; cast your venom upon those that admire themselves; I know already that these things are worthless."—Mart., xiii. 2.

such: and to trip knowingly, is so ordinary with me, that I seldom do it otherwise, and rarely trip by chance. 'Tis no great matter to add ridiculous actions to the temerity of my humour, since I cannot ordinarily help supplying it with those that are vicious.

I was present one day at Bar-le-Duc,[1] when King Francis II., for a memorial of René, king of Sicily, was presented with a portrait he had drawn of himself: why is it not in like manner lawful for every one to draw himself with a pen, as he did with a crayon? I will not, therefore, omit this blemish though very unfit to be published, which is irresolution; a very great effect and very incommodious in the negotiations of the affairs of the world; in doubtful enterprises, I know not which to choose:—

"Ne si, ne no, nel cor mi suona intero."[2]

I can maintain an opinion, but I cannot choose one. By reason that in human things, to what sect soever we incline, many appearances present themselves that confirm us in it; and the philosopher Chrysippus said,[3] that he would of Zeno and Cleanthes, his masters, learn their doctrines only; for, as to proofs and reasons, he should find enough of his own. Which way soever I turn, I still furnish myself with causes, and likelihood enough to fix me there; which makes me detain doubt and the liberty of choosing, till occasion presses; and then, to confess the truth, I, for the most part, throw the feather into the wind, as the saying is, and commit myself

[1] September 1559. Bar-le-Duc was the ancient capital of the county, afterward Duchy of Bar, at this time incorporated with Lorraine.

[2] "My heart does not tell me either yes or no."—*Petrarch.*

[3] Diogenes Laertius vii. 1, 79.

to the mercy of fortune; a very light inclination and circumstance carries me along with it:—

> "Dum in dubio est animus, paulo momento huc atque Illuc impellitur."[1]

The uncertainty of my judgment is so equally balanced in most occurrences, that I could willingly refer it to be decided by the chance of a die: and I observe, with great consideration of our human infirmity, the examples that the divine history itself has left us of this custom of referring to fortune and chance the determination of election in doubtful things: "Sors cecidit super Matthiam."[2] Human reason is a two-edged and dangerous sword: observe in the hands of Socrates, her most intimate and familiar friend, how many several points it has. I am thus good for nothing but to follow and suffer myself to be easily carried away with the crowd; I have not confidence enough in my own strength to take upon me to command and lead; I am very glad to find the way beaten before me by others. If I must run the hazard of an uncertain choice, I am rather willing to have it under such a one as is more confident in his opinions than I am in mine, whose ground and foundation I find to be very slippery and unsure.

Yet I do not easily change, by reason that I discern the same weakness in contrary opinions:—

> "Ipsa consuetudo assentiendi periculosa esse videtur, et lubrica"[3];

especially in political affairs, there is a large field open for changes and contestation:—

[1] "While the mind is in doubt, in a short time it is impelled this way and that."—Terence, *Andr.*, i. 6, 32.

[2] "The lot fell upon Matthew."—*Acts* i. 26.

[3] "The very custom of assenting seems to be dangerous and slippery."—Cicero, *Acad.*, ii. 21.

"Justa pari premitur veluti cum pondere libra,
Prona, nec hac plus parte sedet, nec surgit ab illa."[1]

Machiavelli's writings, for example, were solid enough for the subject, yet were they easy enough to be controverted; and they who have done so, have left as great a facility of controverting theirs; there was never wanting in that kind of argument replies and replies upon replies, and as infinite a contexture of debates as our discovery has extended in favour of lawsuits:—

"Cædimur et totidem plagis consumimus hostem"[2];

the reasons have little other foundation than experience, and the variety of human events presenting us with infinite examples of all sorts of forms. An understanding person of our times says: That whoever would, in contradiction to our almanacs, write cold where they say hot, and wet where they say dry, and always put the contrary to what they foretell; if he were to lay a wager, he would not care which side he took, excepting where no uncertainty could fall out, as to promise excessive heats at Christmas, or extremity of cold at Midsummer. I have the same opinion of these political controversies; be on which side you will, you have as fair a game to play as your adversary, provided you do not proceed so far as to shock principles that are broad and manifest. And yet, in my conceit, in public affairs, there is no government so ill, provided it be ancient and has been constant, that is not better than change and alteration.

[1] "As a just balance, pressed with equal weight, neither dips nor rises on either side."—Tibullus, iv. 41.

[2] "We are slain, and with as many blows kill the enemy."—Horace, *Epist.*, ii. 2, 97.

Our manners are infinitely corrupt, and wonderfully incline to the worse; of our laws and customs there are many that are barbarous and monstrous: nevertheless, by reason of the difficulty of reformation, and the danger of stirring things, if I could put something under to stop the wheel, and keep it where it is, I would do it with all my heart:—

> "Numquam adeo fœdis, adeoque pudendis
> Utimur exemplis, ut non pejora supersint."[1]

The worst thing I find in our state is instability, and that our laws, no more than our clothes, cannot settle in any certain form. It is very easy to accuse a government of imperfection, for all mortal things are full of it: it is very easy to beget in a people a contempt of ancient observances; never any man undertook it but he did it; but to establish a better regimen in the stead of that which a man has overthrown, many who have attempted it have foundered. I very little consult my prudence in my conduct; I am willing to let it be guided by the public rule. Happy the people who do what they are commanded, better than they who command, without tormenting themselves as to the causes; who suffer themselves gently to roll after the celestial revolution! Obedience is never pure nor calm in him who reasons and disputes.

In fine, to return to myself: the only thing by which I something esteem myself, is that wherein never any man thought himself to be defective; my recommendation is vulgar, common, and popular; for who ever thought he wanted sense? It would be a proposition that would imply a contradiction in itself; 'tis a disease that never is where it is

[1] "The examples we use are not so shameful and foul but that worse remain behind."—Juvenal, viii. 183.

discerned; 'tis tenacious and strong, but what the first ray of the patient's sight nevertheless pierces through and disperses, as the beams of the sun do thick and obscure mists; to accuse one's self would be to excuse in this case, and to condemn, to absolve. There never was porter or the silliest girl, that did not think they had sense enough to do their business. We easily enough confess in others an advantage of courage, strength, experience, activity, and beauty, but an advantage in judgment we yield to none; and the reasons that proceed simply from the natural conclusions of others, we think, if we had but turned our thoughts that way, we should ourselves have found out as well as they. Knowledge, style, and such parts as we see in others' works, we are soon aware of, if they excel our own: but for the simple products of the understanding, every one thinks he could have found out the like in himself, and is hardly sensible of the weight and difficulty, if not (and then with much ado), in an extreme and incomparable distance. And whoever should be able clearly to discern the height of another's judgment, would be also able to raise his own to the same pitch. So that it is a sort of exercise, from which a man is to expect very little praise; a kind of composition of small repute. And, besides, for whom do you write?—The learned, to whom the authority appertains of judging books, know no other value but that of learning, and allow of no other proceeding of wit but that of erudition and art: if you have mistaken one of the Scipios for another, what is all the rest you have to say worth? Whoever is ignorant of Aristotle, according to their rule, is in some sort ignorant of himself; vulgar souls cannot discern the grace and force of

a lofty and delicate style. Now these two sorts of men take up the world. The third sort into whose hands you fall, of souls that are regular and strong of themselves, is so rare, that it justly has neither name nor place amongst us; and 'tis so much time lost to aspire unto it, or to endeavour to please it.

'Tis commonly said that the justest portion Nature has given us of her favours is that of sense; for there is no one who is not contented with his share: is it not reason? whoever should see beyond that, would see beyond his sight. I think my opinions are good and sound, but who does not think the same of his own? One of the best proofs I have that mine are so is the small esteem I have of myself; for had they not been very well assured, they would easily have suffered themselves to have been deceived by the peculiar affection I have to myself, as one that places it almost wholly in myself, and do not let much run out. All that others distribute amongst an infinite number of friends and acquaintance, to their glory and grandeur, I dedicate to the repose of my own mind and to myself; that which escapes thence is not properly by my direction :—

"Mihi nempe valere et vivere doctus."[1]

Now I find my opinions very bold and constant in condemning my own imperfection. And, to say the truth, 'tis a subject upon which I exercise my judgment as much as upon any other. The world looks always opposite; I turn my sight inwards, and there fix and employ it. I have no other business but myself, I am eternally meditating upon myself, considering and tasting myself. Other

[1] "Skilled in living and doing well for myself."—Lucretius, v. 959.

men's thoughts are ever wandering abroad, if they will but see it; they are still going forward:—

"Nemo in sese tentat descendere"[1];

for my part, I circulate in myself. This capacity of trying the truth, whatever it be, in myself, and this free humour of not over easily subjecting my belief, I owe principally to myself; for the strongest and most general imaginations I have are those that, as a man may say, were born with me; they are natural and entirely my own. I produced them crude and simple, with a strong and bold production, but a little troubled and imperfect; I have since established and fortified them with the authority of others and the sound examples of the ancients, whom I have found of the same judgment: they have given me faster hold, and a more manifest fruition and possession of that I had before embraced. The reputation that every one pretends to of vivacity and promptness of wit, I seek in regularity; the glory they pretend to from a striking and signal action, or some particular excellence, I claim from order, correspondence, and tranquillity of opinions and manners:—

"Omnino si quidquam est decorum, nihil est profecto magis, quam æquabilitas universæ vitæ, tum singularum actionum, quam conservare non possis, si, aliorum naturam imitans, omittas tuam."[2]

Here, then, you see to what degree I find myself guilty of this first part, that I said was the vice of presumption. As to the second, which consists in not having a sufficient esteem for others, I know

[1] "No one thinks of descending into himself."—Persius, iv. 23.

[2] "If anything be entirely decorous, nothing certainly can be more so than an equability alike in the whole life and in every particular action; which thou canst not possibly observe if, imitating other men's natures, thou layest aside thy own."—Cicero, *De Offic.*, i. 31.

not whether or no I can so well excuse myself; but whatever comes on't I am resolved to speak the truth. And whether, peradventure, it be that the continual frequentation I have had with the humours of the ancients, and the idea of those great souls of past ages, put me out of taste both with others and myself, or that, in truth, the age we live in produces but very indifferent things, yet so it is that I see nothing worthy of any great admiration. Neither, indeed, have I so great an intimacy with many men as is requisite to make a right judgment of them; and those with whom my condition makes me the most frequent, are, for the most part, men who have little care of the culture of the soul, but that look upon honour as the sum of all blessings, and valour as the height of all perfection.

What I see that is fine in others I very readily commend and esteem: nay, I often say more in their commendation than I think they really deserve, and give myself so far leave to lie, for I cannot invent a false subject: my testimony is never wanting to my friends in what I conceive deserves praise, and where a foot is due I am willing to give them a foot and a half; but to attribute to them qualities that they have not, I cannot do it, nor openly defend their imperfections. Nay, I frankly give my very enemies their due testimony of honour; my affection alters, my judgment does not, and I never confound my animosity with other circumstances that are foreign to it; and I am so jealous of the liberty of my judgment that I can very hardly part with it for any passion whatever. I do myself a greater injury in lying than I do him of whom I tell a lie. This commendable and generous custom is observed of the Persian nation, that they spoke of their mortal enemies and with whom they were at

deadly war, as honourably and justly as their virtues deserved.

I know men enough that have several fine parts; one wit, another courage, another address, another conscience, another language: one one science, another, another; but a generally great man, and who has all these brave parts together, or any one of them to such a degree of excellence that we should admire him or compare him with those we honour of times past, my fortune never brought me acquainted with; and the greatest I ever knew, I mean for the natural parts of the soul, was Etienne De la Boetie; his was a full soul indeed, and that had every way a beautiful aspect: a soul of the old stamp, and that had produced great effects had his fortune been so pleased, having added much to those great natural parts by learning and study.

But how it comes to pass I know not, and yet it is certainly so, there is as much vanity and weakness of judgment in those who profess the greatest abilities, who take upon them learned callings and bookish employments as in any other sort of men whatever; either because more is required and expected from them, and that common defects are excusable in them, or because the opinion they have of their own learning makes them more bold to expose and lay themselves too open, by which they lose and betray themselves. As an artificer more manifests his want of skill in a rich matter he has in hand, if he disgrace the work by ill handling and contrary to the rules required, than in a matter of less value; and men are more displeased at a disproportion in a statue of gold than in one of plaster; so do these when they advance things that in themselves and in their place would be good; for they make use of them without discretion,

honouring their memories at the expense of their understandings, and making themselves ridiculous by honouring Cicero, Galen, Ulpian, and St. Jerome alike.

I willingly fall again into the discourse of the vanity of our education, the end of which is not to render us good and wise, but learned, and she has obtained it. She has not taught us to follow and embrace virtue and prudence, but she has imprinted in us their derivation and etymology; we know how to decline Virtue, if we know not how to love it; if we do not know what prudence is really and in effect, and by experience, we have it however by jargon and heart: we are not content to know the extraction, kindred, and alliances of our neighbours; we desire, moreover, to have them our friends and to establish a correspondence and intelligence with them; but this education of ours has taught us definitions, divisions, and partitions of virtue, as so many surnames and branches of a genealogy, without any further care of establishing any familiarity or intimacy betwixt her and us. It has culled out for our initiatory instruction not such books as contain the soundest and truest opinions, but those that speak the best Greek and Latin, and by their fine words has instilled into our fancy the vainest humours of antiquity.

A good education alters the judgment and manners; as it happened to Polemon,[1] a lewd and debauched young Greek, who going by chance to hear one of Xenocrates' lectures, did not only observe the eloquence and learning of the reader, and not only brought away the knowledge of some fine matter, but a more manifest and more solid profit, which was the sudden change and reformation

[1] Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Polemon.*

of his former life. Whoever found such an effect of our discipline?

> "Faciasne, quod olim
> Mutatus Polemon? ponas insignia morbi
> Fasciolas, cubital, focalia; potus ut ille
> Dicitur ex collo furtim carpsisse coronas,
> Postquam est impransi correptus voce magistri?"[1]

That seems to me to be the least contemptible condition of men, which by its plainness and simplicity is seated in the lowest degree, and invites us to a more regular course. I find the rude manners and language of country people commonly better suited to the rule and prescription of true philosophy, than those of our philosophers themselves:—

> "Plus sapit vulgus, quia tantum, quantum opus est, sapit."[2]

The most remarkable men, as I have judged by outward appearance (for to judge of them according to my own method, I must penetrate a great deal deeper), for soldiers and military conduct, were the Duc de Guise, who died at Orleans, and the late Marshal Strozzi; and for men of great ability and no common virtue, Olivier and De l'Hospital, Chancellors of France. Poetry, too, in my opinion, has flourished in this age of ours; we have abundance of very good artificers in the trade: D'Aurat, Beza, Buchanan, L'Hospital, Montdoré, Turnebus; as to the French poets, I believe they raised their art to the highest pitch to which it can ever arrive;

[1] "Will you do what reformed Polemon did of old? will you lay aside the joys of your disease, your garters, capuchin, muffler, as he in his cups is said to have secretly torn off his garlands from his neck when he heard what that temperate teacher said?"—Horace, *Sat.*, ii. 3, 253.

[2] "The vulgar are so much the wiser, because they only know what is needful for them to know."—Lactantius, *Instit. Div.*, iii. 5.

and in those parts of it wherein Ronsard and Du Bellay excel, I find them little inferior to the ancient perfection. Adrian Turnebus knew more, and what he did know, better than any man of his time, or long before him. The lives of the last Duke of Alva, and of our Constable de Montmorency, were both of them great and noble, and that had many rare resemblances of fortune; but the beauty and glory of the death of the last, in the sight of Paris and of his king, in their service, against his nearest relations, at the head of an army through his conduct victorious, and by a sudden stroke, in so extreme old age, merits methinks to be recorded amongst the most remarkable events of our times. As also the constant goodness, sweetness of manners, and conscientious facility of Monsieur de la Noue, in so great an injustice of armed parties (the true school of treason, inhumanity, and robbery), wherein he always kept up the reputation of a great and experienced captain.

I have taken a delight to publish in several places the hopes I have of Marie de Gournay le Jars, my adopted daughter[1]; and certainly beloved by me more than paternally, and enveloped in my retirement and solitude as one of the best parts of my own being: I have no longer regard to anything in this world but her. And if a man may presage from her youth, her soul will one day be capable of very great things; and amongst others, of the perfection of that sacred friendship, to which we do not read that any of her sex could ever yet arrive; the sincerity and solidity of her manners are already sufficient for it, and her affection towards me more than superabundant, and such, in short, as that

[1] She was adopted by him in 1588. See Leon Feugere's *Mademoiselle de Gournay: Etude sur sa Vie et ses Ouvrages.*

there is nothing more to be wished, if not that the apprehension she has of my end, being now five-and-fifty years old, might not so much afflict her. The judgment she made of my first Essays, being a woman, so young, and in this age, and alone in her own country; and the famous vehemence wherewith she loved me, and desired my acquaintance solely from the esteem she had thence of me, before she ever saw my face, is an incident very worthy of consideration.

Other virtues have had little or no credit in this age; but valour is become popular by our civil wars; and in this, we have souls brave even to perfection, and in so great number that the choice is impossible to make.

This is all of extraordinary and uncommon grandeur that has hitherto arrived at my knowledge.

END OF VOLUME THE THIRD